



# THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION  
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

*Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.*

No. 37.

Price, Five Cents.



THEN FOLLOWED RAPID SHOTS AND WILD YELLS AS BUFFALO BILL OPENED FIRE WITH HIS REVOLVERS UPON THE RED-BREAST AND HIS GANG.



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Price Five Cents.

## Buffalo Bill and the Haunted Ranch;

OR,

### The Disappearance of the Ranchman's Daughter.

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By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE WRECKED RANCH.

It was a wild Western ranch, and located in a land that had justly won two names—one, "Paradise Valley," on account of its wonderful beauty of scenery, climate and fertility of its soil, and also "Devil's Land," from the reason that it was cursed by a lawless element that had stained its soil with deeds of blood.

But "Ranch Restful" was a home of hospitality and comfort, its latchstring ever outside to those who sought shelter there. Major Hart, the owner, had dared penetrate into the country as the first settler, and, with his son and daughter, two negro servants and half-a-dozen bold cowboys, had risked the dangers of that wild land.

Others had followed his lead, and here and there

were neighboring ranches, though miles away; but their occupants were of a lower class than that from which Major Hart had come.

The nearest fort was a long day's journey distant, and the ranch people had to depend greatly upon themselves for protection from raiding bands of Indians who would strike that locality at times, and what was almost as bad, the banded outlaws who lived upon their robberies of honest men.

Up to this ranch one afternoon, long years ago, rode William F. Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill, the Border King.

In fact, the great plainsman, at that time chief of scouts for the military district in which Ranch Restful was located, had won as many border names as any one man—even Buffalo Bill—could well stagger under, for he was known as the "~~Pistol~~ Dead

Shot," the "Saddle King," "Scalp-Taker" and others that fitted his strange, adventurous and eventful life.

He had started upon a trail alone through the military district, to gather information from the different settlers as to the number of men on their ranches, so as to learn just what force of cowboy rangers could be relied upon as allies to an army in case of an Indian uprising that was threatened; the redskins, urged on, he believed, by the lawless element, who were anxious to raid the settlement, as they were now on the warpath hunting for soldiers' scalps.

Buffalo Bill had known the country and the valley well, long before the smoke of a single white man's habitation curled up there from a cabin.

But of late he had not gone there, and he had never met the inmates of Ranch Restful; but now he had a letter from the fort commandant to Major Hart, for the latter had once been an army officer and stationed upon the frontier; so wild life was not unknown to him.

But to the major's son and daughter the frontier fort was known only as they remembered it as a boy of fourteen and a girl of twelve; yet they were glad to go back to the wild, free land of the Far West.

When Buffalo Bill rode up to the ranch he saw at a glance that something had gone wrong, for out upon the piazza to meet him came the two negro servants, Peter and his wife Nancy, and they were both wailing in a way that was pitiful to hear.

"Well, old man, what has gone wrong?" asked the scout, touched by the deep distress upon the faces of the negroes.

"Oh! oh! eberyting hab done gone wrong, sah!" cried the woman.

"Is some one dead? Quick! tell me, what is the matter?" said Buffalo Bill, sternly.

"Yes, sah, all is dead, for I specks Missy Hazel is by this time.

"Yes, sah, Marsa Hart, de majah, an' his son, Marsa Harry, is lyin' dead in the home now, while Missy Hazel hab been carried off by de outlaws."

"Both the major and his son have been killed?" cried the scout, in a startled tone.

"Yes, sah."

"How did it happen, my man?"

"My name Peter, sah, Black Peter, called Pete fer short.

"Yer see, sah, marsa an' his son went off on a ride together, and two hours after up came two men

who say dey both been hurted, and want Missy Hazel to come ter de ranch whar dey be, an' come fixed ter stay some days ontill dey git better.

"Well, sah, Nancy, dat my wife here, fix her up bundle of things, while I git her horse ready, an' she rode away wid de men.

"But soon arter up come, toward our ranch, cowboys, who tell us both marsa and Marsa Harry hab been kilt by outlaws, and dem ones Missy Hazel went wid am some ob de same bad lot.

"Den he say de men was bringing home the dead bodies, and all was den goin' in chase of dem as had Missy Hazel.

"Well, sah, dey brought home de corpuses of de majah an' Marsa Harry, an' went off on horseback arter Missy Hazel.

"Nancy an' me jist finished layin' out de poor, dead corpuses when you come."

"How long ago did those men leave?" sternly asked Buffalo Bill, checking Peter in another wail of grief.

"'Bout two hours, sah."

"How many cowboys went?"

"All in de ranch, sah."

"How many?"

"Seven, sah, and I does hope dey will get Missy Hazel back."

"It was a dastardly and bold game to capture the girl; but you must put under your grief now and get to work, for I am hungry, and wish a good supper, and wish to give my horse a feed.

"Then put me up a bag of provisions, and I will take the trail of those cowboys, and I think I can be of service to them, for I am a scout from the fort, and came here to see Major Hart."

"Glory to gracious! I knows we'll see Missy Hazel ag'in, fer you looks it, from head ter toe! What might your name be, sah?" said Nancy.

"I am called Buffalo Bill at the fort."

"Lordy! does yer heah dat name, Nancy?"

"Does yer heah dat dis am de great Buf'ler Bill, what de majah and Marsa Harry done talk so much about.

"Stir yer stumps, ole woman, an' git de best feedin' in dis house, an' I'll take his horse.

"Mister Buf'ler Bill, I is yer servant, sah, an' we is proud to know yer, 'deed we is."

Buffalo Bill dismounted and Peter took his horse, while Nancy hurried into the cabin to prepare sup-

per, greatly awed by the presence of the scout she had so often heard of, and of his wonderful deeds.

Having taken the saddle off of the horse, Peter said:

"I'll rub him down fine, sah, and take de best ob kur ob him, while you take a look at dem den, sah; dey is in dere," and he pointed to the family sitting-room, which opened upon the piazza of the large log cabin.

Buffalo Bill strode into the room and took off his broad sombrero as he stood in the presence of the dead.

The major had been neatly dressed by the negroes and was upon the best lounge, his hands clasped upon his breast.

His son, a youth of twenty-two lays upon a sofa, also prepared for the coffin.

"My God! but this is a terrible sight for that girl to return to—all the life wiped out in one instant!

"Yes, and they have her in their power, for it was to get possession of her this crime was committed.

"By the Heaven above, but she shall be rescued, and quickly! Yes, and I swear the murders of her father and brother shall be fully avenged, for within the hour I shall take the trail of these crime-stained fiends, and not rest until I have run them down," and Buffalo Bill showed deeper feeling than was his wont, and his words were uttered with deadly earnestness.

Buffalo Bill made no idle threat, and meant to do what he said.

Major Hart was dead—murdered.

His son also was dead—murdered.

His daughter was the captive of outlaws, and what would be her fate?

Such was the situation that stared Buffalo Bill in the face.

The comfortable home, showing that its dwellers were refined and educated people, the furnishings revealing the tasty touch of a woman's hand, were gazed at by Buffalo Bill with deep sorrow in his heart.

But he was too well used to scenes of death and suffering to allow what was about him to take his appetite away, and he ate heartily of the very substantial and tempting supper Nancy prepared for him.

Now and then he asked the woman a question or two that might be useful to him, and, as the sun was

close upon the horizon, he called to Peter to bring his horse, and prepared for the start.

"You must close the house well, and let no one enter who is not of your own people.

"Do not tell any one that may come that I have been here and gone upon the trail, for I do not care to have it known.

"You will bury the bodies to-morrow, Peter, I suppose?"

"Yes, sah, I'll make de coffins to-morrow first thing, sah. I knows now, as you is goin' arter Missy Hazel, dere won't be no need ob a coffin fer her."

"I hope not, but I will see to it that there are graves dug for those who carried her off;" and the scout added, as he mounted:

"My horse is like a dog, Peter, for if I put him on a trail he follows it in the night, as though on a scent. Good-by, and you and Nancy must keep up a stout heart and hope to see Miss Hazel back again, though God knows it will be a desolate home she will come to."

With a "God bless you, sah," from the two negroes, Buffalo Bill rode away, took the trail left by the cowboys following the track of Hazel and her captors.

Buffalo Bill had another motive in coming to this part of the country than to learn the numbers of the fighting men among the settlers.

He had long been anxious to have a home, a ranch, and stock it, and, having saved up some money, he had purchased, some time before, a place that had a bad name on account of ill-omened memories that clung to it.

It was known as the "Haunted Ranch," and the day before he had gone to Ranch Restful, the home of Major Hart, he had been to his new property and investigated it.

"I did hope to get a week or so to look over my new ranch," he said, as he rode along the trail of the cowboys who had followed Hazel Hart and her kidnapers; "but this is a duty that I cannot slight or delay—the service of that poor girl.

"Well, night is coming upon us, Trailer, so I leave it to you to prove your name and follow the trail through the darkness;" and he affectionately patted his splendid horse, which had so far not swerved from the track.

When darkness did shut out all about them, Trailer still held on his way without any hesitation.

He seemed to have what his master claimed for him—the instinct of a dog for following a scent, and Buffalo Bill depended wholly upon him to keep to the trail.

After a ride of several hours at a swinging walk, the country became more rolling; then they entered the foothills of a range of rugged mountains.

“Well, Trailer, you are swinging your head from side to side now, as though you were not just certain about the trail, and as we are all of thirty miles from the Hart Ranch I guess we had better go into camp and see what the morning will bring us,” said the scout, and he began to look about for a good camping place.

He soon found it upon the banks of a small stream, and, after first looking to the comfort of his horse, he spread his own blankets and sat down to eat his supper from the good things old Nancy had supplied him with.

He went to sleep with perfect confidence, well knowing that his faithful and intelligent horse—his boon companion on many long and desperate trails—would arouse him at the first sign of danger.

Trailer knew his business perfectly and rose as though a watchdog.

The night passed without any alarm. Trailer had fed well, and, with his master, was ready for all that was before them when day dawned.

After a hearty breakfast, Buffalo Bill saddled his horse and rode on.

He at once saw that he was in a rock country that left no trail, and he could understand how it was that Trailer had been at fault the night before.

Dismounting, he began to go ahead on foot, his horse following, and his ready energy bent to find some trace of a trail, for he felt confident that the kidnapers of Hazel had gone through the pass to the mountains, into which Trailer had followed the night before.

From the direction the trail had led, and the nature of the country, he did not see how they could have taken any other way.

That they would not remain in the open ranch country with their prisoner, but would seek their retreat in the mountains, he was perfectly well assured.

After a while he discovered a faint trail, and, mounting, decided to let Trailer try it again.

The horse moved off quickly, as though he knew just what he was about.

A ride of half-an-hour brought him to the mouth of a large cavern, which permitted him to enter on horseback; but, dismounting, he took from his pocket a match and candle, and, thus armed with a light, penetrated into the tunnel-like way.

The traces on the rocky flooring showed him that the cavern was often used, for there were iron hoof-marks upon it, and he went along with the greatest caution.

But no larger cavern presented itself to his view, only the continuance of the tunnel-like cave, while here and there another aisle would branch off upon the right or left.

For half-a-mile he had gone, and then ahead of him he saw daylight, and at once put out his candle and advanced with the utmost caution.

But he reached the end of the cave, and saw that he had simply passed under the range of wild and rugged hills, which he well knew had no pass through them for many miles upon either side of where he had entered.

Before him he saw a lovely valley, with a loftier range of mountains beyond, and above the tree-tops on their sides, miles away, he beheld a number of columns of blue smoke curling lazily upward.

“A Sioux encampment, by the glory of the Rockies!” he exclaimed.

Then, after a few moments’ silence, in which his eagle eyes swept the valley, the hills he had passed under, which towered far above his head, and the mountains beyond, he continued:

“Well, I think I have made a discovery, and I shall follow the lead I have taken to bedrock.

“Those vigilantes, renegades, regulators, or whatever they call themselves, have no den in these mountains, that is certain, only, having discovered this tunnel, they use it to their advantage, and, if I mistake not, are in league with the redskins. Anyhow, I shall soon know, for I camp on this trail until something turns up. Ha! there comes some one on horseback.”

He quickly took from a saddle pocket a field glass and turned it upon a point a couple of miles away, where his keen eye had detected something in motion.

“Yes, there are four of them, and they are Indians, and heading down the valley.

“As soon as they are hidden by the timber again, I will head them off.”

He had not long to wait before the four horsemen disappeared from sight once more, going at an easy gait toward the valley.

Instantly, at a trot, Buffalo Bill started down the hillside, Trailer following him closely.

Picking his way, he turned into a cañon, which he considered the best trail to follow, but suddenly darted back, his hands fairly flashing his revolvers from his belt, and instantly the rocky glen rung with the rattle of firearms.

But once he began to fire, Buffalo Bill sprung forward, instead of backward, and, leaping over the bodies of two men he had slain, he came upon three more, who had suddenly darted out from a narrow ravine.

"Surrender, or you die!" cried one of the three, in ringing tones, throwing his pistol forward to fire.

But, ere it reached a level, it was knocked from the ruffian's hand by a bullet, and his arm fell, helpless, to his side, while Buffalo Bill covered the hearts of the other two and said, calmly:

"This is my treat, pards, so what'll you take, life or death?"

"You has ther drop, so it's fer you ter call," sullenly answered one.

"Then drop your weapons, both of you!"

The two men hastily unbuckled their belts and cast them one side, while the third, who was tenderly nursing his shattered hand, said, savagely:

"Curse you! I've got your mark for life."

"I'll put you out of your misery, if you prefer it, pard," was the cool reply.

"Curse you, no! But who the devil are you, and what do you want, coming into a peaceful camp as you have done?"

"It don't look very peaceful, pard, with you bleeding, and those two gents with turned-up toes; but it's a way I have of doing, and I'm awful glad I come."

"What do you want?"

"I'm out calling, and would like to know if Miss Hart is at home?"

"What do you know of her?" quickly asked the seeming leader of the party, glancing at his two comrades, who stood dejectedly by.

"Is she here?"

"No."

"I've a notion to clip your lying tongue, and if you don't tell me where she is, I'll do it."

"Do you see that ravine?" and the man pointed to a gap in the cañon.

Buffalo Bill turned his head to look, when, quick as a flash, the man thrust his hand into his hunting shirt, and, drawing forth a small pistol, fired.

## CHAPTER II.

ROBIN RED-BREAST.

At the shot of the ruffian Buffalo Bill's pistol dropped from his hand, and it was evident that he was wounded; but, without an instant's hesitation, he raised his left hand, which held a revolver, and at the report the man fell dead, a bullet in his brain, while his two comrades, who were rushing upon their foe, believing him at their mercy, stopped short with a suddenness that was ludicrous, and cries that were piteous for him to spare them.

"I've a mind to kill you both," he said, sternly.

"Don't do it, pard, for we hain't no weapons hid."

"Shuck yourselves quick, so that I can see."

With astounding rapidity they obeyed, shaking their woolen shirts violently to show that no deadly weapons were concealed within their folds.

"All right; put on your rig again, or you might catch cold and die, and I prefer that you should live to be hanged."

"Oh, pard, what hev we done?" cried one, innocently.

"Where is the maiden you stole from her home?"

"Up the ravine yonder."

"Ah! is she alone?"

"Ther horses are with her."

"Why did you kidnap her?"

"Orders, pard."

"From whom?"

"The boss."

"What's his name?"

"They calls him cap'n; thet's all I know him by."

"Captain what?"

"No; jist cap'n."

"And do you know him by no other name?" and Bill turned to the other ruffian.

"Nary."

"Where is he now?"

"Don't know."

"When did you see him last?"

"Yesterday."

"Where?"

"Here."

"He came here?"

"Sure."

"Alone?"

"Nary; he had the gal an' some pards with him."

"And he left her with you?"

"Yes."

"What were you to do with her?"

The men remained silent.

"I asked what were you to do with the lady?"

"You kilt the boss, an' he knowed."

"And you know, too, so answer me."

"Shall we, Buck?" asked one of the other.

"What terms will you give us, pard?"

"A bullet in your brain if you don't."

"Lordy! I'll talk, I will!"

"I'll sing, too."

"See that you do. What were you to do with the maiden?"

"Keep her here until called for."

"By whom?"

"An Injun chief as is a white man."

"What?" asked Bill, in surprise.

"Hes yer ever heard o' Robin Red-Breast, as ther Injuns call him?"

"Yes; he is a white man, a renegade, who is chief of a Dog-Soldier Sioux band, and a most infamous devil."

"Yer has got him down fine as silk, pard. Waal, he are the man."

"And what were you to give the maiden to him for?" sternly asked Buffalo Bill.

The man who had been the speaker glanced at his comrade, who, seemingly understanding his look, said:

"Spit it out, pard, fer talk are cheaper than funerals."

"Yer is right. Waal, pard, yer see ther Robin Red-Breast hev been in love with ther queen o' ther Sioux, whose name are Ma-ree, which means Red Dove——"

"I have heard of her."

"So I reckons, fer she are a screamer fer beauty."

"Go on with your story."

"Oh, I'm a spoutin' it; as I were discoursin', ther Red-Breast are in love with ther Red Dove, but ther Black Bear, the great medicine chief o' the Sioux, don't like him, no more than does ther Dove, an'

they sot him adrift, which made him mad, an' he swore ter git ther gal.

"But jist then he see the daughter o' Major Hart, the same as we hev up ther cañon yonder, an' he got dead gone on her, same as our cap'n who see ther Red Dove got broke up with love fer her, and ther two concluded ter make a trade."

"A trade?"

"Yes, pard, a swap."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that ther cap'n hed it prime ter git ther white gal, an' ther Red-Breast hed it so as he c'u'd git ther Red Dove, an' they agreed ter capter ther gals an' swap.

"Ther cap'n did his part o' ther job an' left us here with ther pale-faced leddy, an' we is waitin' fer ther Red-Breast Robin, who were ter git ther redskin leddy, an' fetch her here, an' it were ter be a fair swap. Now, pard, yer has ther gospil o' it."

"And thank Heaven I came as I did to thwart the vile deviltry."

"You hev did it, or I don't know stiffs when I sees 'em layin' 'round permiscuous like."

"Tell me, does the Robin Red-Breast know who is to be here to make the exchange?" suddenly asked Buffalo Bill.

"Guess not, pard."

"Then you obey me in this matter, and I'll see you do not suffer."

"Praise the Lordy fer thet, pard."

"I'll receive the Red Dove, and then let matters adjust themselves."

"Whew! Thar is goin' ter be music, or I am a lyin' Chinee," muttered one of the ruffians, and the other said:

"I is on ther side o' ther uppermost dog in ther scrimmage."

"Remove those bodies," and Buffalo Bill pointed to the dead men he had slain.

"Whar shell we put 'em, pard?"

"Out of sight, anywhere."

The men obeyed, throwing their dead comrades into a clump of bushes.

"Now come down the cañon with me."

Silently they obeyed.

A walk of half-a-hundred yards brought them to the ravine, and into this Buffalo Bill turned, closely following his prisoners.

A few steps had they gone, when half-a-dozen

horses were discovered, one wearing a side-saddle, and beneath a scrub pine nearby, and securely bound to it, was a maiden, attired in a dark blue riding habit.

She glanced quickly up, with a look of terror, at beholding the two ruffians, and half sprung to her feet, as she caught sight of the splendid-looking man following them.

One glance into his face, and she seemed to read there that she had a friend, for she cried earnestly:

"Oh, sir, you have come to save me from those wretches!"

When the captive maiden arose at his coming, Buffalo Bill beheld before him a form of rare grace and beauty, the hands bound tightly behind her back, and a face of exquisite loveliness, though of almost deathly pallor.

Her soft sombrero, with its sable plume, had fallen from her head, and lay at her feet, and masses of golden curls were revealed, while her eyes were dark blue, and full of tenderness, though as he gazed into them, he saw there was a pleading, hunted look.

"Yes, Miss Hart, I have come to save you," he said in his deep, low tones.

"You know me, it seems, sir; am I so remiss as to forget that we have met before?" she asked, softly.

"No; we have never met before, Miss Hart, but I am your friend, and have been on the trail of your captors."

"I heard firing a while since, and your sleeve has blood on it," she said, anxiously.

"A slight wound, which I will trouble you to bandage for me, if you will be so kind, as soon as I have attended to a little matter on hand," and as he spoke he freed the maiden of her bonds, while one of the outlaws remarked to the other:

"A leetle matter, he calls it, pard. Waal, ef I hain't wrong, it will be a 'arthquake, when ther Robin comes up with ther Dove, an' they is about due now."

"Yas, an' ther Robin will git picked o' his pin-feathers, I'm a considerin'," was the reply of his comrade.

"Hark!"

At the command, from the lips of Buffalo Bill, all listened, and distinctly to their ears came the sound of hoof-falls.

"Miss Hart, if I seem cruel in what I do, rest as-

sured that I know what a heinous crime was intended against you, and that the one I deal with is a human monster," explained the scout, quickly, and, turning to his two captives, he continued sternly:

"Remember, you side with me in this trouble, men."

"Yas, pard, I are with you."

"And me, too," were the answers of the two, though the villainy in their faces indicated that they would be treacherous if it suited their interest better.

Darting down to the mouth of the ravine, Buffalo Bill saw coming what at first appeared to be four Indian warriors, mounted upon mustangs, but which a second glance revealed as two Indian braves, a maiden and a white man, in the war toggery of a chief.

It was the same party he had seen across the valley half-an-hour before, and he knew that he saw before him, the renegade white chief of the Dog-Soldier Sioux, two of his warriors, and Red Dove, the Sioux Queen, as the Indian maiden was called, since two years before she had discovered a war party of Cheyennes marching against the village of her people, and had ridden back and given warning in time to turn what would have been a victory for their foes into a total defeat.

At the sight of Buffalo Bill the party quickly came to a halt, but he held up his hands, the palms turned toward them in token of peace, and they rode forward, though on their guard.

As they came to a halt, the Robin Red-Breast suddenly cried out:

"Bill Cody! Good God!"

In an instant he had recognized him as one he had met before, and, though his Indian rig disguised him beyond the recognition of Buffalo Bill, he saw that the man had some cause to fear him, and the hands of the two dropped upon their revolvers.

There followed several rapid shots, wild yells, the falling of horses, trampling of feet, and away dashed the Red-Breast upon the back of one of the mustangs before ridden by a warrior, for his own steed had fallen, and, springing forward, Buffalo Bill had caught the maiden in his arms, for he had shot her pony, just as the renegade chief was about to dash away with her.

All had happened so suddenly that Hazel Hart

hardly knew what had transpired, though she had been a witness of the fracas.

Then she saw three mustangs lying upon the ground in the entrance to the ravine, a warrior dead, another writhing in death agonies, and heard the clatter of hoofs up the cañon, as the Red-Breast sped away, while Buffalo Bill stood calmly in the midst, and by his side was Red Dove, the beautiful Indian maiden.

Then she looked around for the two white men, who had promised to be the allies of Buffalo Bill, and saw that they had taken advantage of the fight to make themselves scarce.

"The great white chief has saved the Red Dove from a wicked foe of her people," said the Indian maiden in good English, turning her dark, lustrous eyes upon the scout, who mentally decided, as he gazed upon the slender form, in its gorgeous, barbaric dress, proud features, and bronzed skin, that the report of Red Dove's beauty had not been exaggerated.

"Yes, and I, too, owe him more than life," said Hazel, advancing and joining them, and the maidens—the paleface and the redskin—gazed upon each other with admiration.

"It was a devilish plot between Robin Red-Breast and Dagger Don, the vigilante captain, to exchange you, the one for the other, and I am glad I thwarted their little game.

"But this is not a healthy neighborhood, as the Red-Breast may have other warriors near, so let us depart," warned Buffalo Bill.

"The Red Dove would return to her people," said the Indian maiden, calmly.

"Is there a village across the valley on the mountain side?"

"Yes, great chief; she was taken near there by the Red-Breast, through the treachery of a young warrior of her own tribe whom she did not love."

"Do you fear to go alone?"

"No; the Red Dove has no fear."

"Then I will transfer your trappings from your mustang to one of the horses of those white devils who deserted me in the fight; but I guess they acted for their own good, as I might have lost patience with them soon."

With this remark, significant of harm to the two captives who had decamped, Buffalo Bill selected the best of the lot of horses for Red Dove, and soon

had him ready for the maiden, and raised her lightly to his back.

"Good-by, white chief, and the Red Dove will not forget you," she said, holding out her hand to Buffalo Bill, and without another word, or a look at Hazel, she darted away up the cañon and disappeared from sight.

"Now, Miss Hart, I will be glad to escort you to your home," and Bill spoke sadly, for well he knew how bitter would be the tidings he had to tell her as they rode toward that desolate home.

Tying the horses of the outlaws together, the scout raised Hazel to her saddle, and, driving the loose animals ahead, mounted Trailer and set out for Hart ranch, happy in having secured the maiden, but pained beyond expression at the sad tidings he felt he must make known to her.

### CHAPTER III.

#### BUFFALO BILL MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN.

From Buffalo Bill, who broke the sad tidings as kindly as such bitter news could be told, Hazen Hart heard all, and to him she seemed to cling as her only friend, and he advised her to still remain on the ranch, which was just beginning to bring in good returns, and simply keep within call of the house several cowboys, in case she should need them at any time.

"As for the vigilante captain, I guess he won't trouble you any more, for there are good men in these parts, who will check his high-handed acts," he said.

"And you?" she asked.

"Oh! I like this part of the country, and intend to locate here.

"There is a pretty spot over here in the hills, half-a-dozen leagues away, which I intend to make my home, although I have heard from the cowboys that they say the place is haunted."

"What! You don't mean the Haunted Ranch?" asked Hazel, in surprise and with alarm.

"Yes, miss; the land was located by Rathburn, a ranchero, I learn, and he and his family were killed there shortly after they had built a comfortable cabin to live in."

"Yes, that is the place, and no one knows who killed them, and the heir of Mr. Rathburn also lost his life there.

"Then a ranchero, who bought it of the next heir, was killed in the same mysterious way, and next a cowboy, who went there to live, was found dead several days after. Oh! you will not go there," said Hazel, earnestly.

"Indeed, I will."

"But they tell such strange stories of weird forms seen there at night by all who follow trails leading near."

"I rather like ghosts, and, as I bought the ranch from the lawyers in whose hands it at last fell, I shall go there."

"You bought it?"

"Yes, miss, for it went to two lawyers after the death of the last heir, and I gave a mere song for it, and was coming here soon to occupy it, when some renegade devils murdered an old friend of mine, and I struck their trail, and here I am."

"But, good-by, Miss Hazel, and, should you need me, you know where to find me."

"But no cowboy will go near the Haunted Ranch."

"Yes, they will, if you send them," and, again bidding the maiden good-by, Buffalo Bill mounted Trailer, and, driving before him the horses he had appropriated from the captors of Hazel, he started for his new home, which had, indeed, a weird name in the neighborhood.

He had gone but a few miles when he met several horsemen, who eyed both him and the horses suspiciously for a moment, and then one of them called out:

"I say, stranger, it looks suspicious for a man not known in these parts to be driving horses ahead of him, and they has a familiar look, too."

"Well, I will be known before long, if you interfere with me, and if you recognize these horses you must be some of the same gang that their riders belonged to."

Buffalo Bill had halted, and instantly faced the three men on horseback, and his bold front, where they had the advantage of numbers, and implied threat of better acquaintance with him, at once disconcerted the party, and the one who had before spoken remarked:

"Waal, pard, we don't say as yer is dishonest, only that strangers with horses looks suspicious; but if we knowed who you were, then I guess it would be all right."

"I am not ashamed of my name, so will tell you

that it is William Cody, and that men call me Buffalo Bill, the Dead Shot Scout. Perhaps you have heard of me?"

The last was spoken in a dry tone, and Buffalo Bill enjoyed the effect of his name upon the horsemen, one of whom said, quickly:

"Oh, yas, we has heer'd o' yer, and we is glad to meet yer, pard."

"It is more than I can say for my part regarding you; but I am Buffalo Bill, and I have bought the Haunted Ranch, and if any of you think those horses were stolen, why just come after them."

"Good-day," and the fearless man rode on after his horses, while his questioners seemed fully content with the explanation as to who he was.

Continuing on his way, Buffalo Bill soon after meeting the three men, came in sight of the mountain spur in which was the Haunted Ranch.

From the way in which he struck the trail leading up the steep hillside, it was evident that he had been in the locality before.

Half-way up the side of the hill, which almost rose to the prominence of a mountain, upon a level space an acre in size, was situated the cabin in which so many tragedies had been enacted.

It was a stoutly-built log house, containing four rooms; its two windows in front, and one on either side, commanded every approach to it, and the plateau on which it was situated; while behind it, rising over a hundred feet, was a sheer cliff wall that was a shelter to the lonely cabin.

At one end of the plateau was a cañon, cutting through the cliff and extending back to a fertile valley half-a-mile from the house, where there was ample range for a thousand cattle. Nature had walled in the plateau by impassable barriers upon all sides, rendering it a secure corral.

Into this cañon Buffalo Bill first turned his led horses, and, having lariatied Trailer out to feed near the cabin, he entered it, for the door was not locked.

A few rude pieces of furniture, such as tables, cots and chairs, a shelf with cooking utensils and a bearskin in good preservation, were all the articles visible in the four rooms; but Bill, setting to work at once, cleared up the place, and, building a fire upon the hearth, soon had things looking comfortable, at least.

"Now to the settlement for some supplies, and I'll

be at home to all callers, be they friends or foes," he muttered.

Catching one of the horses, as a pack animal to bring back his supplies, he mounted Trailer and set off for Poker City, as it was called, though it rejoiced in but one tavern, several blacksmith shops, a dozen saloons, half as many stores and a tavern known as the Ranchero's Exchange, which was not a bad appellation, as the ranchmen generally exchanged good money there for poor accommodations and poorer whisky.

Of course, around these central resorts were grouped the shanty residences of the denizens of Poker City, who, it is needless to say, were generally a hard lot.

A busy place in the daytime, for Poker City supplied the wants of the settlers for a hundred miles around; it was also a wild place, for here congregated all idlers, as well as traders, rancheros, cowboys, a few scrub miners, and notorious characters to drink bad liquor, gamble or behave as they liked best, or as far as the better classes of the community would allow.

Buffalo Bill had been in Poker City before, when scouting for the government some years previous, and he knew well just the kind of place he was going to, and that it was likely he would get into trouble with some of the rougher elements, after his rescue of Hazel Hart.

But this thought did not in the least disturb him, as he is one of those fearless natures that never shunned danger, never created a row, but once in one, stayed to the bitter end, and felt confident of rendering a good account of himself with whatever weapons he might be called upon to use.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### TAMING A BRUTE.

The sun had not set when Buffalo Bill rode into Poker City, and, putting his horses up at the Ranchero's Exchange, sought the best grocery in town.

From the moment of his arrival, he was the object of all eyes, and the town was exceedingly crowded, as rumors had gone about of the death of Major Hart and his son, at the hands of the vigilantes, and of the kidnaping of Hazel, and her rescue by some daring stranger.

There were some who wondered that Captain Don, of the vigilantes, should do so high-handed an act as to kill two such respectable citizens as Major Hart and his son, when he was one who had been made chief of the Regulators to put down lawlessness in the community.

Who had kidnaped Hazel was not known, though it was whispered about that Captain Don had done this, too.

Then scouts reported that Black Bear's village of Sioux, numbering over three hundred lodges, were encamped in the mountains to hunt, but it was feared they intended to attack the settlements, and this caused great uneasiness, although the Indians were then in a kind of patched-up peace with the whites.

The band of Dog-Soldier Sioux, the outcasts and outlaws from the regular tribe, were known to be in the mountains somewhere, while a gang of horse-thieves were said to be hanging about, and things generally looked blue, and caused hot discussions on all sides.

In this hour was it that Buffalo Bill entered the town, and his splendid form, handsome face, long chestnut hair, and general makeup riveted every eye upon him.

To one and all he was known by reputation, as his deeds in Kansas and Missouri had spread over the whole border, and wild prairiemen looked upon him as a hero of heroes.

But it seemed that none in the different crowds knew him by sight, and on all sides came the questions:

"Who are he, pard?"

"Does yer know?"

"Hain't he some on ther han'some?"

"Does yer guess he'll back up his looks?"

"Is any o' yer goin' ter feel him fer luck?"

Buffalo Bill heard some of these questions, and remarks of like nature, but, unheeding one and all, quietly went to the grocery, and began his purchases of blankets, provisions, an ax, pick and shovel, ammunition, and other articles he expected would be useful in his new home.

These he paid for in gold, and asked to have packed on a packsaddle, ready for a horse he would bring for them when ready to start.

Seeing that his purchases did not break him financially, a huge loafer, leading a tremendous and

savage-looking Russian bloodhound by a chain, came forward to get acquainted, and asked:

"Stranger, does yer want ter buy a dorg?"

Bill turned quickly upon him, and evidently expected the question was meant as an insult; but, seeing the magnificent brute, he answered quietly:

"Yes, what will you take for him?"

"He are tall."

"So I see."

"In price I mean."

"So I expect."

"He are fierce."

"So much the better."

"He are all kindness to his owner and ther devil let loose to a stranger."

"Do you own him?"

"Yes."

"I'll give you fifty dollars for him."

"Can't see it, pard."

"What do you ask, then?"

"I'll gamble you for him."

"Against what?"

"Two hundred dollars."

"Done! When and where?"

"Right in Pard Sloan's back room."

Sloan, the grocer, having just sold his new customer a large bill of goods, readily gave his consent, and the man and his dog, Buffalo Bill and half-a-dozen lookers-on that were in the store, adjourned to the back room, and the game of cards was commenced, the dog being tied on one side, and the money placed on the table.

"Hold on, pard," suddenly cried Buffalo Bill, as he detected a covert act of his antagonist to play a card he had taken from his sleeve.

"What are it, stranger?"

"Simply that if you attempt to cheat me again, I'll inherit the dog through your death," was the reply in a cool tone.

"You don't dare——"

"Shut up and play the game out, and then if you consider yourself insulted resent it," interrupted Bill, and he rose in the estimation of the lookers-on by his quiet manner.

The cowboy, for such he was when he had work to do, scowled, muttered a few unintelligible words, and the game continued, and Buffalo Bill won the bloodhound.

Raking the money back toward him, Bill turned

and approached the savage brute, just as the cowboy cried:

"I'm durned ef you didn't cheat me, stranger, and you'll not get the dog."

"I will."

"Nary; at him, Tiger!"

The dog growled fiercely, but Bill did not hesitate, but, fastening his piercing eyes upon him, and with a stern command for him to lie down, advanced upon the savage brute, while the crowd looked on with awe and amazement.

"At him, Tiger! at him!" cried the cowboy.

Again the dog growled fiercely, and reared up, pulling hard against his chain, which was fastened to a staple in one of the logs of the cabin.

With a bound, Buffalo Bill was upon him, his hand clutching his throat, and then he gave him some stunning blows upon either side of his head with his open palm, while the crowd was wild with excitement.

Thoroughly cowing the dog by his immense strength and utter fearlessness of him, he hurled him from him into the corner, just as the cowboy, armed with a knife, rushed upon him, shouting:

"Cuss yer, yer shan't steal my dog from me."

They were the last words he uttered, as, turning quickly, Bill's revolver went to a level, and with the report the cowboy dropped.

"Mr. Sloan, give me something for my dog to eat," said Bill, quietly, wholly ignoring the man he had killed.

"Certainly, sir; certainly; here is a nice piece of antelope meat a hunter left for me," cried the store-keeper, and, again walking up to the brute, Bill gave him the tempting repast, and stood by while he ate it.

Then he released the brute from his chain, and called to him to follow.

Instantly the animal obeyed, and went crouching at his feet.

"Mr. Sloan, please have that body buried at my expense," and, tossing a few gold pieces upon the counter, as he motioned to the dead body of the cowboy, Buffalo Bill left the grocery, closely followed by the huge brute, now thoroughly tamed, and obedient to his new master.

## CHAPTER V.

## IN POKER CITY.

The successful taming of the bloodhound and the killing of the cowboy who attacked him in Sloan's grocery spread rapidly around Poker City, and when Buffalo Bill appeared, the dog at his heels, going over toward the Ranchero's Exchange, he was more curiously regarded than ever.

As the sun had set, and the supper hour was near at hand, the tavern taproom was crowded with the patrons of the place, and many others who just dropped in to see what was going on.

"I can get supper here, I suppose, sir?" queried Bill, politely addressing the host of the Exchange, a tall, cruel-faced man in his shirt sleeves, and with a pipe in his mouth.

"If you pays for it you can; but we don't board dogs," was the rude answer.

"I always pay for what I get, and my dog has had his supper," said Buffalo Bill, without the slightest show of anger, a circumstance which made Bouncer, the tavern-keeper, think the stranger had heard of him as a dangerous character, and dreaded him.

Buffalo Bill took out the price of his supper and handed it to the man and started for the supper-room, for the bell just then was ringing to announce that the meal was ready.

"Hold on, pard; I doesn't admit dogs in my dinin'-room," yelled the host, and his loud voice attracted the attention of all, who instantly stopped and gazed at the stranger, who also came to a halt and turned.

"Which of 'em does yer call ther dog, Bouncer?" asked an ungainly fellow standing near, and whose great size made him a terror in the town, for he was known to possess wonderful strength.

Instantly Buffalo Bill was confronting him, his iron grip at his throat, and his right fist ready for work, while he hissed forth:

"Did you mean that as an insult to me?"

"What if I did?" was the retort of the bully, who felt conscious of his power when he chose to exert it.

"Then you shall beg my pardon for the insult," was the cool reply.

"I guesses yer doesn't know me, stranger," he said, to the surprise of all keeping remarkably calm.

"No, and your friends won't know you when I have done with you, if you don't apologize."

"It hain't in me, pard," and as the bully spoke he attempted to suddenly hurl Buffalo Bill from him.

But the slender hand, like a steel claw, grasped his throat with a strength that almost made the bones crack, and the firm fist rained blow after blow with lightning rapidity upon the brutal face, while, with a dextrous movement of his foot, Bill kicked the feet of the man from under him, and, as he struck the floor with terrific force, he placed a revolver to his head, and said, with astonishing calmness:

"You have just fifteen seconds to live, unless you ask my pardon."

All present had been astounded at the easy manner, apparently, with which Buffalo Bill had handled the giant bully, and none more so than himself, for he had not been able to get in a blow or draw a weapon, and, with his throat paining him, his face cut and swelling from the blows of the sharp knuckles, and the muzzle of a revolver pressed into one eye, he sung out lustily:

"I apologizes, pard, fer all I'm worth, durned ef I don't, an' I says here's my flipper fer yer friend, as I'm proud ter call any man as kin handle me."

Bill instantly moved his revolver, and, stepping back, was about to go on, not noticing the bully's hand; but, as if thinking better of it, he held forth his own, raised him to his feet, and said:

"All right, stick to your words, and I'll be your friend."

"I'll do it; come liquor up with me; come, boys, it's my treat, fer I hev met a better man than I is."

All followed Boss Bricktop—as he was called, first, on account of his being "the boss" of the town as far as strength went, and having hair as red as brick—into the barroom, and those who had noticed Bouncer's evident desire for trouble with the stranger, now saw that he was willing to say no more, and Bill and his dog went together in to supper, the latter, at his new master's command, getting up in a chair by his side and calmly sitting there.

"The stranger are layin' fer Bouncer," whispered one person at the table to another.

"Yas, he is jist weepin' fer ter hev ther Bouncer come in and order that dog out."

"But ther Bouncer won't do it," put in a third.

"He hain't seen him yet."

"Thar he comes now; boys, is we in range?"

The tavern-keeper now came into the room, and walked down one side of the long table and up the other, and it was evident that he saw the bloodhound's conspicuous seat; but he also saw lying in

the plate in front of him a Colt's revolver, and passed on without a word, and out into his office again.

Having finished his supper, and fed the bloodhound some choice pieces of meat, Bill walked out into the bar, and up to the desk, behind which stood the host.

"My dog had supper, too, so I wish to pay for him."

"Five dollars," was the reply.

Bill instantly laid the money in the host's hand, who, failing to get up a row on his exorbitant charge, said gruffly:

"Yer'd better register, ef yer kin write, so as I kin see who are my high-toned dog an' his master."

The crowd waited breathlessly, for they saw that Bouncer was in for trouble, and knew that as he stood behind his desk, a revolver was in his hand.

Bill took the pen without a word, and wrote his name in a bold hand.

Next followed the registering of his dog's name, for he instantly got a name for him, and when he threw down the pen the host glanced at the book and saw:

"Buffalo Bill, Kansas.

"Grip, Russia."

"What! Is yer ther Kansas terror I has heerd so much about as a killer, an' is thet a terrier?" said the host.

"I am from Kansas, and it has been my misfortune to have had to kill a few of just such wretches as you are, for meddling with me and my affairs," was Bill's cool reply.

"Waal, yer is in ther wrong place ter put on frills, pard, as——"

"Hold! Drop that pistol!"

The ringing words of Buffalo Bill interrupting the words of the landlord, turned every eye upon him, and they saw that, quick as was Bouncer on the draw and shoot, the keen eye of the stranger had detected his intention to raise his weapon from behind the desk, and with marvelous rapidity he had covered him with his own revolver.

Bouncer turned deadly pale, for he saw that he had been beaten at his own game, and there was that in the look of the man before him which told him the man was not to be trifled with.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE VIGILANTE.

"Did you hear, sir?"

As Buffalo Bill spoke, his revolver covering the head of the landlord, his finger seemed to press nervously against the trigger, and Bouncer loved life too well to hesitate where there was not a chance in his favor, and let fall the pistol.

"Now, sir, let me say that I have become a settler in this part of the country, expect to come often to Poker City, and shall always visit your hotel; so, if you have cause for a quarrel with me, you will have ample opportunity to settle it.

"If, on the other hand, you care to visit me, you will find me at the Haunted Ranch, which I have purchased, intending to go into the cattle business."

Replacing his weapon in his belt, amid the murmur of astonishment his words created, Buffalo Bill started to leave the tavern, the faithful Grip at his heels, when Boss Bricktop, who had been a delighted observer of the discomfiture of Landlord Bouncer, called out:

"Pard, does yer mean it, that yer hangs out in the Haunted Ranch?"

"I do."

"It are full o' speerits, an' thar is a score o' dead men planted near ther cabin."

"I have always found dead men good neighbors, and, as for the spirits, I like them, and beg all of you to join me in running them down now," and Buffalo Bill led the way to the barroom, the sure road to the hearts of many present, and the ringing of the supper bell had not created so unanimous a movement as his invitation caused.

But, though they crowded in close, they yet gave Grip plenty of room, as several times he had given vent to a low, vicious growl of admonition.

"Set 'em up, barkeeper, for the party.

"Landlord, will you join us?" and Bill turned to Bouncer, who had not yet recovered from his surprise at being so cleverly mastered in his own house.

"I'll not take a shingle off my own house, ef I does hev ter drink with a man I don't like. Brandy, Dave," growled Bouncer.

"I ask no man's liking, and court no man's dislike," was Bill's haughty response, and, all being served with drinks, he continued, pleasantly:

"Your very good health, gentlemen."

He had just paid the score, and received back his change from the barkeeper, when in came a party of three or four men, having evidently just dismounted.

"The vigilante captain," cried a score of voices, while the landlord said:

"Glad to see you back again, Captain Don. Any fresh news?"

The one he addressed was a man whom Buffalo Bill had once had a deal with, but whose steel shirt had protected him from instant death.

The scout knew him at a glance as a desperado of the worst kind.

The vigilante captain glanced over the crowd, nodding pleasantly here and there, and answered, as he stepped to the bar, not having apparently caught sight of Buffalo Bill:

"Yes, Bouncer, there is news; for that fellow, whoever he be, that looks so like me, has been up to some devilish tricks, for he has shot young Hart, hung the old major, and kidnaped his lovely daughter Hazel."

"Yes, we heard thar had been the devil ter pay and no pitch hot, over at ther Hart ranch, but we thought thet you hed did ther work an' know'd yer biz as why yer hed ter," answered the landlord.

"No; I have been off with these boys on a scout, and, coming back by the Hart ranch, learned what had taken place, and that it was all laid at my door.

"I tell you, gentlemen, it made me mad, for I have sins enough of my own to answer for, without this double of mine dashing through the country, committing the very acts of lawlessness that I am endeavoring to put down as a vigilante, and I have registered an oath to run him to cover and hang him."

"Pardon me, sir, but do I address Captain Don, Dare-Devil Don or Dagger Don, as people call you?" and Buffalo Bill stepped before the vigilante captain.

"You do, sir; whom have I the honor of meeting?" and the vigilante looked unflinchingly into the face of Buffalo Bill, without the slightest sign of ever having met him before.

"Do you ask that question, sir, when it has been so short a time since we met, under circumstances to cause you to remember me well?" sternly said Bill.

"Upon my word, sir, we have never met before; if so, I fail to recall when and where."

"I shall remind you, sir, by accusing you of being the one who killed young Hart in a duel, kidnaped his sister and hung his father, and who once saved your cowardly life in your duel with me by the woven steel shirt you wear."

All were astounded at this bold charge, and Landlord Bouncer muttered to Bricktop:

"That game rooster with ther dog has got his match now, fer even I gives in to the vigilante cap'n."

"I hain't so durned sartin' o' thet," responded Bricktop, who, having been well thrashed by Buffalo Bill, had adopted him as his hero.

All were now as still as death, awaiting the vigilante's reply to the bold words of the stranger.

And, in an off-hand, smiling manner, it came:

"My dear sir, did I not know that you had mistaken some one else for me, I would be compelled to resent your words in a very decided way; but, as you appear to be a stranger here, I will explain to you that I am Captain Don, the chief of the vigilantes, that I am an ranchero, am known all around Poker City for half-a-hundred miles, and have lately been so unfortunate as to find that I have a double, who has been committing sins that, by those who do not know me well, are laid at my door.

"As for Major Hart, I knew him well, liked him and his son, and loved his sweet daughter, but when she saw fit to give me the mitten, I neither wept nor was broken-hearted, but would be her cavalier to-day did she call me to her side, or need my aid."

Buffalo Bill was staggered, for the man's words and manner seemed to bear the impress of truth; but he said calmly:

"One question, sir, and if you do not like my doubting you, of course you have but to resent it."

"A dozen if you wish, as soon as you have informed me who my questioner is."

"It are Buffalo Bill, ther Dead Shot Scout of the army, an' thet critter behind him are his dog, Grip, from Rushy, fer so he hes writ hisself an' ther canine down on my register," cried Landlord Bouncer.

"Yas, an' he hes left his mark on my physiconomy, an' backed ther Bouncer clean down in his own den, while he captered ther animile with a throat squeeze, an' kilt his t'other boss; he did fer a fact,

or I would lie fer cold wittles," put in Bricktop, whose face had not improved by swelling.

"Indeed! I am glad to meet the famous Buffalo Bill, of whom I have heard so much. My hand, sir," said the vigilante captain, pleasantly.

"One question, sir, ere I give you my hand."

"I am waiting, sir."

"Do you wear a shirt of woven steel."

"I am no coward, sir!" was the angry reply.

"The man who resembles you so much, and who certainly is your double in looks, voice and manner, is a coward, then, for he does wear a steel shirt to protect his coward heart.

"Pardon me," and as Buffalo Bill spoke he placed his hand upon the shoulder of the vigilante, then at his side, and carefully felt for what he had seemed to feel confident he would find.

Captain Don bore the search with remarkable good humor, and said, with a smile:

"Well, Sir Dead Shot?"

"I am mystified, I admit, and accept your hand; but if I find there is deception practiced, it will end in a death-grip, I warn you."

The vigilante captain laughed lightly, and responded:

"My dear pard, hundreds of men can swear an alibi for me as regards this double of mine and myself being one and the same.

"Come; a glass with us to welcome you to Poker City."

Buffalo Bill drank the toast offered him, and then turned on his heel and left the Ranchero's Exchange, followed by Grip.

As he passed Bricktop, he motioned to that worthy to follow him, a hint the man was not slow in taking.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A PARD OF A FOE.

After leaving the Ranchero's Exchange, Buffalo Bill went toward the stable where he had left his horses, but, seeing that he was followed, he halted in an unfrequented place, and Bricktop came up, saying quietly as he stopped:

"Did I mistook, pard, in thinkin' thet yer tipped me ther wink when yer comed out?"

"No; I wanted to have you follow me."

"Then I were right, an' it were not the jerkin' o'

my muscles, which you knocked endway—oh, Lordy! Pard, but yer hev got iron fists fer a fact."

"I've got more precious metal in them, Boss, which you can have if you say it's friendship between us, and will serve me."

"I'll do it, pard, fer I owned up I was licked, an' I don't owe you no grudge, fer yer did it han'some, an' I'm yer friend."

"Serve me well, and I will pay you in gold; be treacherous, and I frankly tell you I will pay you in steel."

"I prefer the former, pard."

"Now, what are you doing?"

"Tryin' ter make an honest livin'."

"Doing what?"

"Loafin' round, drivin' cattle when I kin, hangin' up the Exchange fer drinks an' a squar' meal when I kin, an'—an'——"

"And now and then picking up a stray horse, or doing a job that pays?"

"Fact! You has me down fine."

"Well, have you a horse?"

"I has a fine saddle and bridle."

"Ah! Then all you need is the horse?"

"Thet are all, pard."

"You have pistols and a knife, I see."

"It are onhealthy ter go 'ithout 'em in these parts."

"True. Well, here are a couple of hundred dollars for you, and I want you to buy a good horse, fix yourself up, quit gambling and drinking hard, and work for me."

"Lordy gracious! I guess I'd better jine the church at once, I'll be so good."

"You'll get preaching enough from me, if you don't do right, Boss; but I shall trust you."

"Yer kin do it, fer yer is clean white. Now, what's to be did?"

"You know this vigilante captain?"

"The Don?"

"Yes."

"I does."

"Do you like him?"

"As ther devil do holy water."

"How has he wronged you?"

"Waal, I hed a leetle ranch once, me an' a pard, an' thet pard were true as steel.

"But he gambled a little, and ther Dagger Don won his pile, an' I put in mine fer him to try an' get

it back; but it all went the same way, and that made a loafer an' a vagabond out o' me, fer Duffy, my pard, got mad with drink, drew on the cap'n, an' got shot down, an' I buried him up ther cañon yonder."

"All right, then, for I'll win your losses back for you some time."

"What! Does yer handle pasteboard well enough ter play ther Don?"

"I'll risk it with him some time."

"Now, what is your name?"

"Boss Bricktop."

"I do not mean the name you are dodging justice under, but your real name?"

"Pard, once upon a time I forgot that name so far I wrote another that wasn't mine to a check, an' I sarved my time for it, an' then came out here whar I didn't need a handle to put on with baptism ter make it legal."

"Jist call me Boss, an' ef yer like ter vary it a leetle sing out Bricktop, an' I'll be thar."

"All right, Boss, I guess we'll work in the harness together."

"Now, I want you to strike the trail of Dagger Don, watch his every action, who he talks with, and where he goes, and each week come to the Haunted Ranch and report to me."

"Yer won't be thar in a week."

"Why not?"

"Ther spirits will——"

"Hang the spirits! I'll be there, never fear, so come and report to me; but mind you, do not let the Don know you are working up his case!"

"Nary; I are as cunnin' as a fox."

"I feel I can trust you; now look up a good horse to-morrow and rig yourself out and begin work."

"I'll do it, pard, thanks to you; but you must keep your eyes open, fer yer hev got acquainted in Poker City now, and thar be fellers here as w'u'd like ter call in yer chips."

"I'll be at home when they call, never fear," and Buffalo Bill went on to the stable, got his horses, packed his purchases on the led animal, and started out to his Haunted Ranch.

He had gone some seven miles on his way in the darkness, and had come to a trail which he knew branched off to the Hart ranch, a league distant, when he heard the thud of hoofs falling rapidly upon the prairie.

Instantly he was on his guard, but, noticing that there was but one horse, he rode on with almost indifference, so great was his confidence in himself to overcome any ordinary danger.

Soon the horseman came in sight in the darkness, and, seeing him, drew rein, and seemed to be cautiously scanning him.

Buffalo Bill merely kept his eyes upon the stranger and rode on, when the horseman came on after him until within easy distance, and called out:

"Buffalo Bill!"

The scout fairly started at the sound of the voice, and answered:

"Yes, I am Buffalo Bill."

Turning his steed, he rode back toward the stranger, who also advanced toward him until the heads of the two horses were together.

"Miss Hazel!"

"Yes, I am Hazel Hart, and I was seeking you," said the maiden, hurriedly.

"Well, how can I serve you, for it must be something important to bring you out alone on the prairie at midnight, after the dangers you have just passed through?"

"It is important, sir, for I have come to save your life."

"Save my life, Miss Hazel?" asked Buffalo Bill, in surprise.

"Yes, and I owe it to you, after all you have done for me."

"Three men came to the ranch two hours ago for supper, and I overheard from my seat on the back porch what they said."

"And what did they say, Miss Hazel?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"That one of their number had seen you buy a quantity of goods at Sloan's grocery, in Poker City, and saw that you had plenty of money."

"These things you had told Sloan you would call for by nine o'clock with your packhorse, to take to your ranch, and this man had formed the plan to waylay you, and had asked the other two to join him."

"I thank you, Miss Hazel, for this warning," Buffalo Bill said, softly.

"As soon as they left I mounted my horse and came to head you off, and now you can go another trail to the ranch, if you will not come by and remain at our ranch all night."

"Thank you, no; I must go on."

"Then strike the trail half-a-mile below here leading to the right, and you will avoid Dead Man's Creek, where they are to wait for you."

"Ah! there is where they are to lie in wait for me, is it?"

"Well, I must be off, after again thanking you."

"I hope all is going well at the ranch?"

"Yes; will you not stop some time and have a meal, when you are in the neighborhood?"

"Thank you, yes, and very soon, for there is something I wish to see you about; nay, I will ride within sight of the ranch with you now, for you must not go alone, and you can tell me what I would know."

Hazel protested she was not afraid, but Buffalo Bill persisted that the prairie at night was no place for a girl alone, and rode by her side in the direction of the ranch, while he asked:

"Are you sure, Miss Hazel, that it was the vigilante captain who kidnaped you?"

"I am."

"You know him well?"

"Yes."

"There can be no mistake?"

"None, for he is not a man of ordinary appearance by any means."

"True."

"Did he speak of a motive?"

"He was revengeful, I frankly tell you, because I refused his love."

"And sought to force you to marry him?"

"No, for he hated me, never loved me, I am confident; and I believe intended, as you hinted, to sell me to the Indians, or that white renegade."

"There is, it is said, a man his very double in face, form and voice, and who rides the same kind of horse, who is going about the country committing deeds of violence and outlawry."

"Do you believe this?"

"There are many to swear to an *alibi* for the don."

"I cannot believe there are two men so alike."

"Perhaps some enemy of his may be playing this game to get him the credit of his act, and have him hanged for it?"

"It may be, sir; but I would have to see both men together to believe it."

"So I think, and yet when I met him to-night he feigned never having seen me before, and even had

no steel-woven shirt on, for I searched him. I confess I was staggered, so that I am mystified."

"Well, I will help you to solve the mystery, and I believe that I can; but there is the ranch, so do not come out of your way further, unless you will remain all night."

"No, I must go on; good-night."

Away bounded the maiden's horse, and Buffalo Bill turned and rode back on the trail he had come, his head bent in deep thought, though his ears were on the alert for any sound.

Before him trotted the packhorse, and behind him came Grip, the bloodhound, who kept close to Trailer's heels.

Presently Buffalo Bill drew rein, and, dismounting, said, simply:

"A lucky thought, and I'll carry it out."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AMBUSHED.

In a secluded part of a trail stood three men, talking in suppressed, yet eager tones.

They stood just in the edge of a clump of willows, jutting out from a prairie stream, around which the trail ran.

Back in the denser and larger timber were their horses, hitched securely, and muzzled, to prevent their neighing, should another animal come near.

The men had evidently come there for some sinister purpose, for their movements were stealthy, and they kept a close lookout over the dark prairie, as though watching for the coming of some one.

"You is sure he were ter come this trail, Bitters?" asked one.

"Yas, fer he told Sloan he were coming home ter-night, and this are ther trail, onless he wanted ter ride round ther head o' ther divide, jist ter be a-movin' on," answered Bitters.

"And he's got ther dust?"

"He-hev."

"Enough ter make ther risk suthin' worth, fer they do say he are a terrer!"

"He are a terrer turned loose ter feed, as I knows; but what kin he do ag'in a shot as plumps him right over?"

"That are so; and you fires that shot?"

"I does."

"It were good o' you not ter take all fer yerseli, but ter invite me an' Jerry heur!"

"Yas, I were born kind; but ther kindness are ter myself in a leetle way, as, in case I missed him yer'd come in handy, an' it are better ter share a leetle pull than not to git gold, but lead, all fer one's self."

"That's so; but yer doesn't miss, Bitters?"

"Not often, I'll swear; but guns does hang fire sometimes, an' it would be onhealthy fer me ef it did with that chap."

"Yas, he might take Bitters in his'n," put in Jerry, dryly.

"Waal, he hev ther dust, an' he hes a diamint as sparkles beautiful, an' he hev over two hundred dollars in stores an' sich, an' two horses, not ter speak o' his weepens, an' any other leetle things he may hev about his clothes.

"Knowin' these things, I jist got you gerloots ter come an' help me git 'em."

"An' we is heur."

"Yas."

"Waal, yer is ter take him with yer rifle jist as he gits near?"

"Yas, an' you is ter jump fer his horse, an' Jerry fer ther packhorse, an' then ther thing is did, an' by daylight we'll be back in Poker City as innercent as lambs."

"He! he! an' we must say innercent, or ther Vigilantes will string us."

"Nary, when we is Vigilantes ourselves. Hark!"

All was attention, and the three ambushed villains listened attentively, and distinctly heard the sound of hoof-falls upon the prairie.

"He are comin'," whispered Bitters.

"He are, fer a fact," said Jerry.

"Ther Lord help us ter do it prime," fervently put in Bible Ben, who, having been an itinerant parson in his youth, could not drop the habit of asking Divine assistance, even in his acts of devilry.

"He are comin' in a walk, which are good fer my aim," whispered Bitters.

"Ther packhorse are ahead."

"Yas, let him go by, fer we can catch him easy."

"He will come within a few yards o' yer, so as you can hit him prime."

"I knows whar a man's heart hangs out, pard," was the significant reply of Bitters, as he cocked his rifle, rested the barrel on the limb of a willow, and crouched down ready for the fatal shot.

There had now come near the ambushed villains the iron-gray packhorse of Buffalo Bill, going at a steady walk, and evidently heavily loaded.

Behind him some thirty paces came the proud-stepping Trailer, his rider upright in the saddle, and seemingly indifferent to the warning of danger given him by Hazel, although he well knew that he was in the very locality she had heard his foes select as the best place for the perpetration of the red deed.

Past the crouching forms went the packhorse, and Trailer was within ten feet of the horse, when the finger of Bitters touched the trigger; the flash and report followed, and the noble horse shied violently, while to the ground, with a heavy crash, fell the rider.

A yell burst from the lips of the three men; but it was a yell of terror, for suddenly the packhorse wheeled to the rightabout, and what was supposed to be the pack arose upright in the saddle and became a man's form, while a pistol shot rung out, and Bible Ben bit the dust, and Jerry was sprung upon and seized by the throat by the faithful Grip.

Yet, ere another shot came from the unerring revolver, Bitters, seeing his fearful danger, fired hastily, and down dropped the horse upon which Buffalo Bill was riding, pinning him beneath him.

The first thought of Bitters was to rush forward and fire upon the fallen man; but he was not one to take any chances, if he could avoid it, and, like the very wind, he sprung through the thicket, mounted the nearest horse, and rode for his life up the creek.

It was no easy task for Bill to at once divest himself of the dead horse upon his leg; but he succeeded in doing so after a while, and hastened toward the savagely-growling bloodhound, who had dragged his victim to the earth, and still held his sharp teeth in his throat.

"You have done your work well, for he is as dead as the wretch through whose brain I sent a bullet," and Bill patted the dog affectionately, and bade him let go his hold.

Grip at once obeyed and wagged his tail in thanks for his master's praise, while he walked over to examine Bible Ben, to see if the pistol bullet had proved as sure death as his dog's teeth.

Trailer had run off a short distance after the shot; but now, at his master's call, came back with a neigh of pleasure, and Bill picked up the dummy which had been his rider, and which consisted of his purchases

tied up in blankets, and wearing his coat and hat—a most ingenious mock man, which had cleverly deceived the ambuscaders.

Bill quietly laughed at the success of his device, restored his purchases to the pack saddle, and started off in hunt of the horses of the dead men, for he correctly surmised that, as he had heard but one horse gallop off, and there were three men, there must be two more animals near by.

Grip aided him greatly here, and led him directly to the two animals, and upon the back of one the pack saddle and its contents were soon strapped, and, mounting, Bill rode on, muttering:

"I got a hole through a sack of flour and a tinpan, but I made a good horse by that arrangement, and found out that Grip is worth his weight in gold."

Without further adventure Buffalo Bill reached his ranch, deposited his pack saddle upon the floor, turned the two horses of the ambuscaders out into the valley, and lariatied Trailer out to feed near by.

Then he sought rest, Grip taking up his watch near the door.

The sun was high in the heavens when he awoke, for he had been very much fatigued and slept soundly, conscious that Grip would arouse him if danger came near.

Having prepared his breakfast, he set about putting his house in order, fastened a lock on his door, and soon had all comfortable about him, after which he mounted Trailer and rode away to the nearest ranch to purchase his first lot of cattle.

It was noon of the next day when he returned, driving before him half a hundred head of fine cattle he had bought from a ranchero over the river.

Driving them through the cañon into the valley, he started for his cabin, feeling that he had made his first start as a rancher, and thoroughly satisfied with his purchase of the Haunted Ranch.

His half-dozen horses which he had gained were in the valley corral, and apparently enjoying their change of ownership, which gave them a rest and such a rich pasturage, and Bill felt that he was not to be troubled with many visitors, and rejoiced in the fact.

But suddenly, as he approached the cabin, his eyes fell upon a white spot on the door.

It had not been there when he left, and, as he drew nearer, he saw that it was held there by a dagger, and was a piece of paper.

Drawing out the dagger—a small one with an ivory handle—he read on the paper, written in red ink and a bold hand:

#### WARNING!

Take warning, and seek a home elsewhere, or your fate will be the fate of those who lie buried near.

Twice Buffalo Bill read this strange communication over, and then, in his reckless way, muttered:

"Well, here I stay, for we wasn't born in the woods to be scared by the hoot of owls, were we, Grip?"

The bloodhound wagged his tail in reply, and gazed around with apparent admiration of the new home and its surroundings, while he licked his chops with an air of relish at having to tackle a foe soon.

Taking his huge key from his belt, Buffalo Bill unlocked the heavy, nail-studded door and entered the cabin.

His first glance fell upon the cot, which he had neatly made before leaving, and he started at beholding the blankets raised, as though a form lay beneath them.

Drawing his revolver, he advanced, determined to give the occupant a rude awakening, and threw down the blankets.

But even his stern lips parted with a cry at what he beheld there.

It was a skeleton form, the skull resting upon the pillow and grinning up into his face that horrible grin of death, which, in mockery it would seem, rests upon the bony visage of the human being after life has gone and flesh has left it.

The bony hands were clasped over the white, shining ribs that had formed the breast, and, riveted together firmly, the skeleton form lay at ease in the bed.

"Holy Rockies!"

Such were the words that arose to the lips of Buffalo Bill after his first exclamation of surprise.

Then he continued:

"Well, I don't have to kill men enough, but must entertain cut and dried skeletons to boot.

"Now, where in the name of Satan did you come from?"

"Don't know?"

"Well, I do," and, raising the hideous form in his arms, he carried it out of the cabin and hung it upon a peg near the door.

"I guess, as you won't stay in your grave, you'll like it up there," he muttered.

Then, re-entering his cabin, he searched it thoroughly for the discovery of how any one could have entered during his absence.

But the windows were closed and bolted as he had left them, the door certainly had not been unlocked, for the lock he had purchased was an immense one, and had a patent key which he had had with him on his belt.

The flooring was rock and the chimney was too small at the top to admit of any one entering.

"I'll give it up this time; but some of these fine nights for ghosts I'll tackle one and we'll worry it, won't we, Grip?"

But Grip looked as though he would prefer to worry something with more meat upon it than a skeleton form.

## CHAPTER IX.

### HAUNTED.

If the ones who had so mysteriously visited the Haunted Ranch in the absence of its new owner, and placed the skeleton there, had intended to frighten the scout with the supernatural, as well as with the warning stuck on his door, they certainly failed, for he was too well used to death scenes to fear the dead, and had made too many graves in the land to shun them.

As for the warning, he felt fully capable of taking care of himself, and retired that night without the slightest dread of any event that might occur.

As the night was pleasant, he left the door open, and Grip, therefore, had the privilege of going in and out at will, and, after several efforts to find the best place to lie down, decided on the outside of the cabin as the most fitting for a guard dog.

His master had been asleep several hours, when he was awakened by a long-drawn howl from the dog.

"Well, Grip," he said, as it was repeated, "that is dismal music, and I don't care for such a serenade, and, if you are howling for your old master, I'll get jealous."

But when the bloodhound repeated the howl for the third time, Buffalo Bill concluded to get up and reconnoiter, for, not knowing the nature of the animal thoroughly, he thought it might be the best way he knew to give an alarm of danger.

"If that's your note of alarming one, according to the Russian code, Grip, it's a long way off from the right way, for that unearthly howl of yours has set every wolf on the same tone, started all the coyotes to yelping, and made the owls join in the chorus.

"But we'll see what's up," and Buffalo Bill, rifle in hand, was about to step to the door when, with a sharp yell, like one caused by fear, Grip came tearing into the cabin.

"Ah, you cowardly brute, to run that way," and Buffalo Bill stepped fearlessly to the door and looked out.

The night was dark, but for starlight, and as his keen eyes narrowly searched the space in front of the cabin for the cause of the dog's alarm, he suddenly beheld coming toward the cabin from the pine thicket beyond, and in which were the graves of the murdered tenants of the ranch, a form clad in snowy white.

"The devil!"

The impious name of his satanic majesty sprang involuntarily to the lips of the man as his eyes fell upon the robed form.

He saw it glide, rather than walk along, and from its head downward seemed to fall a greenish light that yet shone nowhere else.

"It's a ghost on a rampage, or I'm a liar," Buffalo Bill muttered, more impressed than he cared to admit, even to himself.

"No wonder Grip howled so dismally and stuck his tail in between his legs and hunted the cabin, for yonder What-is-it does look scary.

"As old California Joe says, 'I isn't afeerd, an' I hain't alarmed, nor be I skeert, yet I don't like the varmint.'"

Slowly the ghost, as it certainly appeared to be an object not of the earth earthy, came gliding on, and Buffalo Bill boldly stepped out of the door and waited, his rifle ready across his arm.

"Now, why the devil can't he, she or it lay low in its grave, without prowling around that way, scaring bloodhounds and—well, surprising, I'll call it—yes, surprising honest folks?

"If it did not look so like a woman I'd give it a chance to die again, if a bullet would effect it; but I never yet turned a muzzle at a petticoat, and I won't do it now."

The strange, certainly weird, apparition was not

twenty paces away, and moved toward the cañon, swerving a little from its former course to the cabin.

Passing the door, it continued on to the cañon, and instantly Bill started to follow it.

As he did so, the pace of the apparition quickened its speed; as he went faster, it increased its speed.

"I'll give it a chase, for I'm speedy on foot," he muttered, and away he fled in pursuit.

But the ghostly form glided more swiftly than he did over the uneven ground, and turning into the cañon he lost sight of it.

"Grip! ho, Grip!" he called, and the bloodhound came bounding to his side.

But his every effort failed to make him strike the scent of the mysterious being.

"Well, it must be a good ghost, or you'd soon catch the smell of brimstone about it, Grip.

"Anyhow, we'll give it up, as it don't seem to be dangerous, and it may go to the valley and ride the tails off the horses there, for all I care.

"Come, Grip, we'll go back and finish our nap, and some of these fine nights I'll get my clutches on that ghost and hold on, if it sails off to heaven with me."

So saying, Buffalo Bill retraced his way to his cabin, and, again throwing himself upon his cot, was soon fast asleep, Grip having chosen the inside of the house this time as preferable to the exterior, where ghosts disturbed his slumbers.

The night in the Haunted Ranch passed away without a second visit from the ghostly visitor, and Bill looked carefully over the ground, when he arose the following morning, for some sign of a trail; but none appeared, and for the first time in his life he was beginning to believe that the spirits of the dead were permitted to return to the earth.

As for Grip, he looked ashamed of himself, and drooped his head, and tail, too, when his master read him a lecture upon being afraid of ghosts.

"You may not be able to get your teeth into the seat of his pants, Grip, if it's a gentleman ghost, but, for that very reason, you should feel that he is less able to do you harm.

"If it was a lady ghost, you did right to hunt your own; but we will see yet what it amounts to," and Bill continued to chat with his dog while he prepared breakfast, treating the brute with more cordiality than he did human beings, as he was, when with others, always reserved.

A visit to the valley corral showed him that the

horses had not been ridden either by witch or ghost, and Bill, with no intention of being driven from his new home, set to work to get everything into comfortable shape for life there.

The next night Grip came into the cabin snarling and whining, and, arising to discover the cause, Bill beheld the same ghostly visitant, bound upon the same trail as before.

"Make yourself at home, pard, and don't mind me," he called out, as he returned to his cot.

No trail could be found the following morning, and the scout had just come from the valley, where he had been looking after his cattle, when he saw a horseman had halted, and was leisurely gazing up at the cabin.

He was some distance away on the prairie; but Bill recognized Bricktop, and beckoned to him to come on.

Instantly the horseman obeyed, and in fifteen minutes after, dismounted in front of the cabin.

Buffalo Bill saw that he was well mounted, better dressed and armed, and looked in every way improved from what he had at their first meeting.

"I were a-looking fer yer, pard, when yer seen me," said Bricktop.

"Why did you not come right on to the cabin?"

Boss glanced furtively around him, and said:

"Nary, fer I hain't ther boy ter tackle ghosts."

"It's broad daylight, man."

"Waal, it may be, an' yet I is afeerd o' speerits at any time; has yer seen any?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Holy!"

"Each night."

"Jumping frogs o' Jericho! but has yer?"

"I have."

"Their natur', pard?"

"Well, it looks as ghosts are said to look."

"Lordy! I s'pects yer lit out?"

"No; it scared Grip——"

"Grip?"

"My dog. It scared him badly, and then I went out and had a look at it, and it passed right by and over toward the cañon, and I returned to the cabin, and the next night it took another walk."

"Waal, I'd tuk a walk, an' been still a-walking, ef I'd seen it."

"There is some strange mystery about this place which I intend to solve."

"Be keerful it 'don't solve you, pard."

"I am always careful, Boss; but now tell me if you have discovered anything about the vigilante captain?"

"Yes; I hes found out thet he are two men."

"Two men?"

"Yas, pard, he hev a double."

"You are sure?"

"Sartin."

"Why do you think so?"

"Waal, I was spyin' round yesterday an' rid out o' town with a vigilante who was goin' ter 'nishiate me inter ther gang."

"We got ter ther layout, an' I were 'nishiater proper with becomin' saremonies, an' ther cap'n were thar."

"Waal, I rides back ter town, an' thar were ther cap'n at the Ranchero's Exchange, jist coming out from dinner."

"I axed how long he had been thar an' they tole me all ther mornin', so I concluded I'd look you up an' spout out my diskivery."

"You did right, Boss; so you are one of the vigilantes now?"

"I is what they call a trial member, an' ef I does o. k., then I gets ter be one in good standin', an' thet's what I is layin' fer."

"Well, now, as soon as you have had dinner, you must return to town and keep a close watch upon this vigilante captain, and report to me promptly."

"If you should come when I am not here, just put a note——"

"A note?"

"Yes, for you write, don't you?"

"I does; it were knowing that science that got me inter prison; I write more than I had oughter."

"Ah, yes, I recall your telling me the circumstance; well, write me a note and leave it under yonder large rock against the cliff, if I should be away."

"Tain't likely you'll be away, is it?"

"I might be."

"I'll do it, but I does hate ghosts an' sich."

"They'll not harm you; it is the living, not the dead, who are to be dreaded."

"I dreads both."

"Come, now, we'll have dinner, and then you can return, and on your way back take a note for me to the Hart ranch."

"I'll do it; who fer—Peter?"

"No; it is for Miss Hazel."

"I see," and so saying Boss aided in the pleasant work of preparing dinner, and shortly after departed, bearing to Hazel the following letter, without address or signature:

I am informed by bearer that your foe assuredly has a double, but do all in your power to ascertain the truth of the assertion, and communicate, if necessary, with the one who gives you this, who will tell you where he can be found.

Thanks to your warning, I got home in safety, when but for it I would have been killed.  
Hence I owe you my life.

## CHAPTER X.

### ANOTHER WARNING.

In spite of the prowlings of the apparition, Buffalo Bill did not seem to dislike the Haunted Ranch, but, on the contrary, grew attached to his home, seemingly content with the companionship of his dog, horses and cattle, whose wants he looked after as thoroughly as he did his own.

To assure himself that the valley, which was a bowl in the hills, was really as secure as a corral, he made a careful round on foot, and discovered that not in a single place was it possible for the cattle to get out, other than through the narrow cañon, so thoroughly had nature walled it in.

As it was hundreds of acres in size, full of timber mottes, and had a spring-fed lake in it, nothing more could be desired for the pasturage, until his herds numbered thousands, for the grass grew there with delicious richness.

Cutting down some trees, Buffalo Bill soon erected a barrier in the cañon, to prevent the cattle straying out, and considered himself fixed.

All around him was wild grandeur, the mountains towering above him and upon either side, and inhabited only by bears, wolves, panthers and other wild beasts. Beyond, many miles, were the mountains across rolling prairies, where the Indians had a village, and some leagues away the renegade chief, Red-Breast, was said to have a stronghold for his marauders, the Dog-Soldier Sioux.

But these Buffalo Bill did not fear, and in calm contentment he was seated in front of his cabin the third day after Bricktop's visit, smoking his after-dinner pipe, when he saw a horse and rider coming over the prairie at a sweeping gallop.

Getting his glass, he turned it upon the comer and said, hastily:

"By Jove! it is Miss Hazel."

As the horse drew nearer, the short riding-habit was more readily discerned, and Buffalo Bill saw that she had been pressing her horse hard.

He arose and went to the edge of the plateau, where commenced the steep pathway, to meet her, and, as she drew rein, lifted her from her saddle, while he said, pleasantly:

"I am honored by your visit, Miss Hazel."

"This is no time for compliments, Mr. Cody, for I have come to warn you of another and greater danger," she said, excitedly.

"Your last warning served me well, as I wrote you."

"Yes, and as I passed the willow thicket on the creek I frightened away a pack of coyotes and a flock

buzzards from two human bodies, which showed  
turned the tables upon your intended assass-  
s."

"Yes, with Grip's aid."

"Who is Grip?"

"My dog; here, Grip! come and welcome Miss  
Hazel to our humble ranch."

The bloodhound obeyed by coming near to Hazel,  
rubbing his nose against her gloved hand.

"This is your only companion?" she asked, with  
certain embarrassment of manner.

"Yes, excepting my horses and cattle."

"Ah! that reminds me that I have not told you of  
my danger, and your horses have gotten you into  
a scrape."

"My horses?"

"Yes, for I received this note to-day from Poker  
City, and it was sent by Peter, who went into town  
stores."

"He was met by the man who brought me the  
note from you, and he told him to wait about a while  
until he wrote a letter to me."

"Here it is."

Buffalo Bill took the note, which was written in a  
rough hand, and read aloud:

Will the one to whom I gave a letter from a mutual friend,  
another day, kindly inform that friend that the vigilantes intend-  
ing him a visit this afternoon, as he is accused of having  
horses in his possession he never came by through purchasing  
them.

Such a visit from the vigilantes, and such a charge, can only  
result in one end, if the friend is found.

I would warn him myself, but am to form one of the visiting  
vigilantes, and intended to send a warning by a messenger. I  
have not full confidence in, until I saw the one in town who now  
brought this note to you."

"This is certainly from Boss Bricktop, though I  
have no idea he could write so well, and he has  
completely dropped his border dialect in writing, which  
most seemed natural to him in conversation," said  
Buffalo Bill.

"You take it coolly," said Hazel, in admiration of  
the man's pluck.

"I'll take the visit of the vigilantes equally so."

"You assuredly will not remain here to meet  
them?" said Hazel, in alarm.

"Miss Hart, my home is my castle, and, humble as  
I am, and worthless as my life may be, I shall defend  
it."

"But the vigilantes are all-powerful!"

"I shall meet them."

"God grant you victory; but I fear for the re-  
sult."

"Whatever the result, you will learn, Miss Hazel,  
I did my duty."

A few words more passed between them, and then  
Miss Hart arose and was raised to her saddle by  
Buffalo Bill, who said, kindly:

"Thank you for all this trouble on my part."

"Good-by."

It was all that she dared trust herself to say, and,  
believing that she looked in his face for the last time,  
she rode down the steep path, wended her way along  
the base of the hills, and made a circuit to reach  
her home, as Buffalo Bill had advised, fearing she  
might meet the vigilantes.

After he had seen Hazel disappear, Buffalo Bill  
went into his cabin, and shot off the loads in his rifle,  
double-barrel shotgun—the latter a recent pur-  
chase in Poker City—and his three revolvers.

Then he cleaned them with the greatest care, and  
placed them, with his knife and hatchet, upon a table  
back of the door, ready for instant use.

Trailer, lariat, near on the plateau, was then put  
out to feed in the valley corral, and, returning, Bill  
discovered his foes coming across the prairie.

His face was pale, but calm and stern, and his eyes  
fairly blazed as he disrobed himself of all useless tog-  
gery, and called Grip into the cabin. Leaning  
against the cabin, he quietly eyed the coming horse-  
men, and muttered:

"Thirteen in all; an unlucky number—for them."

"But I subtract Boss, as he said he would be of  
the party, and that leaves twelve—a round dozen for  
us to fight, Grip."

"But you must not come in until the homestretch."

"I guess we'll get hurt, Grip, but I'm sure some of  
'em will be coyote food this night."

The vigilantes had now approached the foot of the  
hill and were beginning the ascent, a man of large  
frame, and mounted upon a large horse, in the lead.

"That is Dunn, the vigilantes' lieutenant, in ad-  
vance, I guess; from what Boss told me about him,  
he looks it."

"I wonder why the captain didn't come?"

"I think I could have entertained him, too, and  
at once have settled the doubt as to this double he  
claims he has."

"Yes, there is Bricktop, and I must be careful not  
to hit him when the band begins to play."

These remarks Buffalo Bill made with the utmost  
coolness, as he continued in his indolent attitude,  
leaning against the door frame.

"Well, stranger, how are you?" cried Dunn, a  
dashing-looking, but evil-faced, man of large size,  
and with a long black beard and hair.

He halted within ten paces of the cabin, and his  
men drew up in line just behind him, Bricktop look-  
ing as innocent as a lamb in the midst of wolves.

"I am well enough," quietly responded Buffalo  
Bill.

"You are Buffalo Bill, I believe," continued Dunn.

"So my pard calls me."

"Won't that name in Kansas by certain deeds, I  
believe?"

"Are you writing a history, pard, that makes you

so curious?" asked Buffalo Bill, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Oh, no, but I want to be certain that you are the man we are looking for."

"Well, am I?"

"I guess so; what do you think, boys?"

It was the unanimous opinion of the horsemen that he was the very man they were searching for.

"Well, I am glad you have found me."

"And so are we."

"What do you want with me, now you have found me?"

"We wish to look at the horses in your corral and see if we cannot find that you didn't get them by buying them."

"No; I got them, excepting one, by killing just such a gang of cowards as you are, whom I caught in deviltry, and who sought to kill me," was the bold reply.

"He admits it, boys; he stole the horses," said Dunn.

"You are a liar; but if you think so, you'd better catch me, for I might escape."

"Not you, for we've got you this time, Buffalo Bill."

"A barking dog never bites," was the prompt reply.

"Well, we will just see those horses, and, if you have stolen them, up to yonder tree you go," said Dunn, savagely.

"Have you got orders for this?"

"Yes."

"Then go to work now, for I tell you I may get away while you go to look for the horses."

"Do you dare us to attack you?" asked the vigilante officer.

"That's about the size of it."

"Dismount, and we'll make this gamecock crow a different tune!" cried Dunn, in a rage.

"Back!"

All started at the ringing cry, just as their feet touched the ground.

"Well?" cried the vigilante lieutenant.

"If any man of your band attempts to enter my cabin, I'll kill him," said Buffalo Bill, firmly, and with the last word he stepped back within the door and disappeared from sight.

Within the light was dim, for the shutters were closed, while without all was bright, and the forms of the vigilantes could be distinctly seen.

"Come, boys, follow me, and you, Boss, as a new member, show what you can do!" cried Dunn.

"Oh, I are heur!" answered Bricktop, taking good care to get a little to one side.

"Three abreast, now; come!" shouted the vigilante lieutenant, and the column moved to within a few paces of the door and halted, while Dunn called out:

"Do you surrender and stand your trial?"

"I am not that kind of a man," was the answer.

"You shall have a fair trial," said Dunn, anxious to get possession of the man without facing his deadly aim, for he knew the Dead Shot would bring down some of them, and he might himself have his usefulness cut short by a bullet.

"Yes, vigilante trials are always fair, for they hang a man and try him afterward," said Buffalo Bill, from within his stronghold.

"You will be taken, and then it will be the worse for you."

"It will be the worst for some of you before I am."

"I'll promise you your life, if you surrender and join the band."

"Your promise is worth nothing to me, and, although I have been so unfortunate as to have frequently to take life, I will never ally myself with a band of outlaws, such as you are."

"Once more—do you surrender?"

"Come in and see."

"We will show you no mercy."

"Wait until I beg for it, and, if the gang is going to attack, begin at once, or I'll set the music going," said Buffalo Bill.

"Charge!"

The word was fairly yelled from the lips of Dunn, and with a long-drawn breath, the band of vigilantes moved toward the cabin.

## CHAPTER XI.

### HAND TO HAND.

Whether the vigilantes expected that their yells would intimidate Buffalo Bill when their threats had failed to do so or not, is not known; but certain it is they went at the cabin with a series of war whoops that would have made an Indian turn pale with envy.

But in the midst of their yells came the ring of a rifle, and Dunn fell dead just inside of the doorway, a bullet through his heart.

Over his body sprang the now enraged vigilantes, and two loud reports rang out, and the shotgun's contents were emptied into their bodies.

But it would not do now to hesitate, and on swarmed the rest of the band, and, with a revolver in either hand, Buffalo Bill met them, firing with a precision and nerve that never deserted him, and four more of his assailants lay on the cabin floor.

But six—not counting Bricktop, who, though in the fight, was not a murderous member—remained, and these all knew that their shots had also taken effect on the daring man who opposed them, though no vital spot had been touched, and for their own

credit they dare not go back to Poker City and report that the one they had intended to hang as a horse thief had whipped the whole of them.

Rushing upon him in a mass, they forced him to drop his pistols, for the work was too close; but he seized his hatchet in one hand, his bowie in the other, and met them with these deadly weapons.

A fearful blow over the head with a rifle laid open his scalp, just as a knife was driven to the bone in his arm, and he went down upon his knees; but instantly he arose, to again fall as a bullet struck him in the leg.

But again only for an instant was he down, and the man who sprang upon him to drive his bowie to his heart fell back with a cloven skull; and once more Buffalo Bill was upon his feet, and, in wild dismay, Boss setting the example, having vainly called to his comrades to fly, the survivors took to their heels.

Down the steep hill, helter-skelter went the survivors, two of them wounded.

But suddenly their captain met them, while riding at full speed to the cabin, and he saw their thinned numbers and heard their story.

In vain he urged them to go back, and, as they rode on in flight, save Bricktop, who remained, he cursed them for cowards, and, dashing on, cried, with savage ferocity:

"That man shall die!"

Up to the cabin he rode, Bricktop by his side, to suddenly reel in his saddle at a shot that seemed to hit him fair.

But he, too, fired, just as a second shot from the badly-wounded scout pierced his brain.

Bricktop threw himself from his horse and ran to the side of Buffalo Bill, who cried:

"Quick! see if that man has not on a wire shirt—he is the man I accused him of being."

"By Heaven, but he has, and your first bullet is lodged in it; but who is the fellow that was his double?" called out Bricktop, forgetting his dialect in his excitement.

"That man lying yonder, who helped him out in his game; but who are those coming?" and Buffalo Bill staggered to his feet, expecting more trouble.

"Soldiers! and coming fast!"

"I hope there is a surgeon along, for I need one, Bricktop."

And a surgeon there was with the half-troop of cavalry that dashed up under a lieutenant, and who called out:

"The general sent me after you, Buffalo Bill, as he heard you had planned to get a ranch here to run down the outlaw vigilantes, and—nothing serious, doctor, I hope, though they carved us like a Christmas turkey."

"Serious, but nothing fatal.

"We must not let him die, lieutenant," was the answer.

Buffalo Bill was carried into the cabin, and the surgeon went to work on him, aided by two soldiers, while the officer and his men rode on to Poker City, guided by Bricktop, and within an hour after their arrival Landlord Bouncer and a dozen other men, all recent members of the outlaw band, were under arrest and on their way to the fort.

Thus was the band of outlaws broken up by the courage and clever plot of one man, Buffalo Bill, and Bricktop, giving up his wild life, became the comrade of the great scout.

For weeks did Buffalo Bill lie in his cabin, suffering from his severe wounds, and from which few men could have rallied.

But at last he was able to be taken in an ambulance to the fort, a halt of one night being made at Ranch Restful, where Hazel warmly welcomed the party, having often met the young lieutenant, Harry Hartwell, in her ride to the Haunted Ranch to ask how the scout was.

After the terrible fight at the Haunted Ranch it was found that the ghost no longer appeared, as it had been a trick of the vigilante to keep people away from his hiding-place, and he, having failed to frighten off Buffalo Bill, had decided to attack him and kill him.

In good time Buffalo Bill became his former self again, and when Hazel Hart married Lieutenant Harry Hartwell, the great scout gave away the pretty bride, and remarked: "It was Hart, but now it is Hartwell, and I am very glad that it is so."

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 38) will contain the story of "Buffalo Bill and the Danite Kidnapers; or, The Green River Massacre."

# PRIZE ANECDOTE DEPARTMENT.

Boys, look on page 30 and see the announcement of the prize contest. We propose to make this contest the most successful and far-reaching ever conducted. From the size of the mail that is every morning dumped on the editor's desk this expectation bids fair to be realized in a most gratifying manner. The stories are pouring in by the hundreds.

Here are some of the best articles received this week:

## An Adventure in the Water.

(By Wilfred N. Derby, New Jersey.)

On Sunday I thought I would like to go for a sail, and owning a small sailboat named the Kansas City, which I kept in New York Bay, I started out early in the morning and took my lunch with me. I got to the boat, which was very small, not holding more than two. I then put up the sail. There was a very strong wind, too strong for a small boat, but I went out and had been sailing about nicely, when a strong puff of wind came and the boat upset. I could swim a little, but not with my shoes on, and only saved myself by holding on to the boat. My screams for help brought men to my rescue and they arrived just in time to save me.

## A Frenzied Herd of Sheep.

(By F. S. Bruggman, San Francisco, Cal.)

It was in the month of June of this year in southern Wyoming the incident of which I write occurred. The sun beat down with almost unbearable heat, and there was an oppressive stillness in the air which seemed to make the sheep under our control uneasy and eager to be on the move. It was the time of day when the sheep usually lay down for a couple of hours, but on this day they would not lay down worth a cent, and it was all the herder and myself, with the assistance of a dog, could do to keep them within bound.

We were on the "trail" to the shearing corral, with a herd of something like 3,700 sheep, and as we had crossed a piece of land the previous day unfavorable for watering sheep, they had not had water for forty-eight hours, which made them restless and constantly on the move, and if the herder had not had my assistance that day he would have lost a considerable number of sheep. This is how it occurred:

We were nearing a small river, and we had determined to water the sheep there, so the herder sent me on ahead to find a suitable place to do it. We wanted to have it over with as soon as possible, but the river in question was one of the worst possible for watering sheep, and it was only after riding two miles up that I found a suitable place. So I put spurs to my horse and came back at a canter, but when I caught sight of the herd I saw it strung along in a line, running as fast as it could straight for the worst part of the river. They had become crazed at the smell of water and before we could do anything to stop them they were at the creek, which at this point had banks four feet straight up from the water. The leaders of the frenzied herd stopped when they arrived on the brink, but those behind, eager to get a show at the water, pushed and crowded till those in front could not hold their footing longer, and in less time than it takes to tell it there were two score of sheep struggling in the mud of the river. There they were up to their bellies in the mud, bellowing at the top of their lungs entirely helpless while the rest of the herd, strung, along the bank for a distance of a quarter of a mile, looked on without getting a drop of the water for which they had made that wild run.

It was the most ludicrous sight I ever saw in my life, and I just lay down on the ground and laughed till my sides ached.

But we had to be quick if we wanted to save those in the river, so we set about pulling them out of the mud, for had we

left them in for any length of time they would most assuredly have been lost. We obtained ropes and throwing a noose over a sheep's head we pulled them from the mud. It was an awful job, for the sheep weighed twice as much as they did otherwise, for their thick wool was soaked with water and mud, and it took us so long to get some of the larger ones landed that they were wellnigh strangled to death. But we got on and all out safely, and drove them up the stream till we came to the place I had found, watered them safely, and then drove them into camp for the night, conscious of the fact that we had saved a good many pounds of mutton from the coyotes that day.

## Nearly Ground to Death.

(By Rodolphe Gauthiere, Indiana.)

I was working in a tin plate factory when this accident happened. One day my foot slipped as I stood near one of the machines, and my shoes got caught in the big cog wheels.

I had started to my death when a young man named Joe Monin took hold of me and pulled his best until the engine could be stopped. When they picked me up they laid me on a bench near by and started to look for bruised places on my foot. They could not find any, but when they took my shoe off they were all benumbed at the sight they saw. There lay my foot, with part of the ankle and heel hanging by just a little piece of skin. They could not stand to look at it because my bones were as visible as could be. I took a little peep at myself, but it made me sick. They took me home in a buggy, and when we got by the house my mother asked me what was the matter, and I told her I was all right. Drs. Vance and Knight were summoned, and they went to work right away. They cut out a piece of flesh which weighed one pound, and they sewed up my leg with fifteen stitches. That is an experience I would not want to go through again I can tell you.

## On a Runaway Car with Dynamite.

(By George Naph, Seattle, Washington.)

"Let her go down slow, keep a sharp lookout ahead and firm hold on your brake handle!"

These were the words uttered by the walking boss as he passed him at the mouth of the greatest tunnel then being built in the West. I was seated in a small work car, and my cargo was fifteen boxes of dynamite, to be delivered at the bottom of this great hole, right in the middle of a vast mountain.

Slowly I rolled along; the track had a drop of over a hundred feet to a mile, and once started nothing could stop me should my car get beyond my control. Well, this is just what happened: All of a sudden my brake rod gave a sudden jerk broke and landed me among my boxes. When I scrambled to my feet I found my car was moving rapidly. I passed each electric light like a flash; they looked like fallen stars. I yelled, and a flagman just stumbled out of my way as we passed him like a flash.

The wheels fairly hummed, the click of the rails seemed to

be continuous. My blood seemed to be frozen in my veins, my eyes were blurred, and my head was fairly going around.

Two minutes more and we would be at the end of the track. What then? Over 100 men were at work ahead. I must dash in among them. Should the crash and jar explode the dynamite it meant death to all. Even the car alone, without an explosion, must bring death to at least a score. The thought was maddening. I screeched and yelled. We were now moving like an express train. To jump meant death. No, I must stick it out. I grasped a box and hurled it over the rear end. It fell, and did not explode. Thank God, I would yet save the lives of those before me.

One box and then another was left behind. Then the car gave a sudden jerk and I was hurled to the floor. On attempting to rise, I was forced to yell with pain, for my leg was useless. I could hear the sound of workmen ahead. I looked over the side of the car. The lights seemed to be one continuous flash. Far ahead I could see the large lights used there. Then the men became visible. I sank back, muttered a prayer, feeling that all was lost.

What was this, the explosion? Such a noise! The roof of the tunnel seemed to fly toward me, and all was over. I woke up in the hospital. I was the only one injured, and not very badly at that. The car had jumped the track at the last moment and none was the worse off for the accident but yours truly.

### A Matter of Life or Death.

(By Clifton Fauntleroy, Baltimore, Md.)

It is my duty on Saturdays in the afternoon to go to work in Baltimore County, not far from the city. I walk half the way. The trestle bridge on which my adventure took place is about midway. This trestle bridge is one of the most dangerous of its kind, being exceedingly narrow and having no sides like most bridges. It is so dreaded by pedestrians that it is called the "One Mile Trestle," though I doubt if it is one eighth of a mile in length. At each end of this great trestle there is a sign: "Beware! No train will stop for any one running the risk of crossing this trestle." There is also a smaller sign at each end of the trestle which is a hand pointing to the quarter mile path for pedestrians. On the Saturday evening of my adventure I was quite late, and it was quite dark. Instead of taking the quarter mile path, I hurriedly and recklessly decided to run across the trestle bridge. When nearly half way over it I heard a rumbling noise. Looking behind me, I saw a quarter of a mile away a swift through train just turning the bend. Standing there about 200 feet above shallow water and rocks, with no means of escape, I cannot describe my feelings, but I remember that I muttered in a hollow voice, "Life or death." I had not given up hope, and quickly stepped to one side of the trestle. When the puffing monster reached me, I simply remember that from the swaying motion of the trestle I was reeling over its side when I felt a firm grip about my neck. When I became conscious I was lying on a blanket in a corner near one of the windows of the engine. The problem, "Life or Death" was solved. The engineer had saved me, but how he has never told.

### My Adventures with a Bear.

(By Frank C. Buben, Ohio.)

One day last winter when my brothers and I were out hunting we stayed at a friend of ours over night. They went hunting the next morning, and I had to stay with the horses. When they were gone I went outside and suddenly I heard the horses snorting and kicking. I was just going back to see what it was when a bear came running along after me. I ran with all my might into the barn, and shut the doors and barred them, but the horses still kept kicking and I could not stop them. All at once I saw the bear looking through a crack and chewing at the logs. There was an old musket in the hut, and I took it and pointed the bayonet at the bear. My aim was true, for I stuck the bayonet right into his nose. He snorted and growled with pain, and the horses kept on prancing, so I jumped up on a chair to get out of their way, when I happened to look and saw the bear getting ready to jump

through a window. I unbarred the door leaving my musket standing, and ran away. At last I got courage enough to come back. Great was my surprise when I saw the bear sticking on my bayonet. I was filled with joy and ran back and told my brothers I had killed a bear. I got the skin, which I have yet. I had left the gun standing and the bear fell on it. My brothers told me it had killed itself. And now when I brag of killing a bear they remind me that it killed itself.

### How It Feels to be Run Over.

(By E. E. Cunningham, New York.)

I started out playing one Friday evening in August and was interested in our game as the eight o'clock trolley car came buzzing along. The lad I was playing with ran across the track, and I, of course, right after him. He then started back with me in the rear, but as I neared the middle of the track the car struck me, and I was shoved along about six feet in the dirt. I tried to release myself, but the car hit me again, catching my right leg and crushing the lower part of it and my foot.

Imagine my suffering being pinned under that car, and they did not dare to start it for fear I would get an electric shock.

After five minute's prying I was released, suffering the pain of a crushed limb and very weak from loss of blood. I was taken the next morning to the hospital where my limb was amputated, and now I will forever be a cripple with crutches, instead of my leg.

### A Bee Hunt.

(By Leroy Freeman, Washington, D. C.)

An interesting thing seen in the West is a bee hunt. Seven or eight men make up the party, armed with axes and whisks of hay or tall prairie grass. A small cask of honey is brought along in order to entice the unsuspecting bees. As soon as the honey is spread on a log a swarm of bees begin to gather, and as they fill themselves with the delicious stuff they make a bee-line for their hives. The party selects a certain bee and follows it. On and on they plod through briars and swamps. At last they come across a dead tree, the kind the bees select for making a hive, and the men ply their axes vigorously. Soon the tree comes down with a thundering crash. The men crowd around with spoons, not heeding the bees, for they seem stupefied by the calamity, which has overtaken them. The combs, which are unbroken, are carefully packed in large casks, while the broken ones are eagerly devoured by the men. When the casks are full the men depart for their camps.

### An Indian Adventure.

(By E. Fargo, Chicago, Ill.)

Last summer as I was in Salamanca, near an Indian reservation, I had an interesting adventure.

I went out hunting one day and returned home very tired. As I was passing a cliff near a ravine I heard a command, "Hold up, or you are a goner."

I ran to the edge of the cliff and looking over, saw an Indian in the act of shooting another Indian. I took a sure aim and fired at the Indian with the gun. He dropped his gun and ran down the ravine, but glanced back and saw me. The other Indian said, "I thank you, you save my life." About three days later as I was about to eat a lunch while out hunting I was startled by a loud yell, and then a rock nearly twice the size of a man's head hit me on the arm.

I heard some person yelling so I ran up the path to the top and saw an Indian sitting on another one. It was the same Indian that I had shot who was now underneath.

The other one told me that he had kept the Indian from killing me.

The Indian underneath had tried to drop the rock on me, but his aim had been spoiled by my friend, who had shot him in the leg.

My friend's name was Gold Eagle.

# BOYHOODS OF FAMOUS MEN.

This department contains each week the story of the early career of some celebrated American. Watch for these stories and read them, boys. They are of the most fascinating interest.

Those already published are: No. 1—Buffalo Bill; No. 2—Kit Carson; No. 3—Texas Jack; No. 4—Col. Daniel Boone; Nos. 5 and 6—David Crockett; No. 7—General Sam Houston; Nos. 8 and 9—Lewis Wetzel; Nos. 10 and 11—Capt. John Smith; No. 12—Wild Bill; No. 13—Dr. Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout; No. 14—Buckskin Sam; No. 15—Seneca Adams ("Old Grizzly" Adams); No. 16—Pony Bob (Bob Haslam); No. 17—Major John M. Burke (Arizona Jack).

## No. 18—Kit Carson, Jr.

There is no more interesting career than that of the man known to fame as Kit Carson, Jr.

Born in a Comanche Indian village, his mother was a half-breed squaw and a Mexican, her father being a noted chief and her mother a Mexican lady of distinguished parentage, who was a captive of the redskins, a voluntary one to save her people from massacre, hence a sacrifice for others.

When a captive of the Comanches, and destined to be put to death, the chief's daughter beheld Kit Carson, the noted plainsman, and, perhaps prompted by the blood in her veins, asked her father, the chief, to give him to her for her husband.

The chief yielded, and thus the life of Kit Carson was saved and he was adopted into the tribe until he could make his escape from those who had been his bitterest foes.

He left the Indian village and his devoted wife, and little son, Kit, Junior, promising to one day take them away.

This he was able to do long after, when the boy was ten years of age.

But the mother died soon after in a mission, and little Kit was left to the care of the priests, who devoted themselves to his training.

He was given a pony, a rifle, revolvers and lariat, and soon became a dead shot and an expert in all games.

He studied hard, and at sixteen was a fine scholar, while he was well up in Greek and Latin, and spoke in addition to his English, both French and Spanish.

The priests intended that he should become one of them, and so educated him for the priesthood; but a Mexican bandit chief, believing the youth to be the son of a prominent Mexican Don of great wealth, kidnapped him from the mission and carried him into Mexico with him.

All efforts to find Kit were unavailing, and after a year he was supposed to have been killed.

But the bandit chief, though he would not allow the youth his freedom, had taken a great fancy to him and would carry him with him on his raiding expeditions in Mexico and into Texas.

When he did so he would have Kit's ankles manacled beneath his horse, and a lariat always holding the boy's horse fast to the horn of his own saddle.

This was the freedom the cruel bandit leader allowed him, and no occasion ever came for Kit to make an effort to escape.

In this way the youth saw all the merciless deeds of the desperate Mexican robber, being compelled to witness the burning of houses, the massacre of wagon trains, murder of women and children and the cruel torture to death of brave men.

After two years of these horrible sights to the youth, and his

cruel captivity, ever kept by the side of the barbarous Vasquez, Kit one day found upon the ground a blacksmith's file, and, unseen by any one, picked it up and concealed it securely about his clothes.

His wide-footed Mexican trousers concealed the manacles upon his ankles, so the little work he did at times on the irons was not noticed.

One day, knowing the chief was to go upon a raid, he pretended to be ill, and was left behind under a villainous-looking guard.

In vain did he plead with the man to aid in his escape, the fellow was too much in fear of his chief to accept a promised liberal bribe, and so Kit had to depend upon himself, and, as soon as he was left alone, completed the filing of his irons, for before the chief left he had fastened him to a chain in a rock.

He had just set himself free when the guard came at a run, suspecting something was wrong, and he had a revolver in his hand.

Kit did not even look up, remained perfectly quiet and suddenly, when the man was near him, sprang upon him like a panther.

It was a desperate struggle for the weapon, and yet the boy was the equal of the man.

At last Kit managed to grasp a knife hilt in the Mexican's sash, and quick as a flash he drove it to the heart of his foe.

With all his witnessing murder scenes and deaths among the Comanches, Kit had never before taken a human life, and he stood like one dazed, for a long time regarding the man.

At last he rallied, and anxious to get away he helped himself to what he needed from the bandit's booty, selected the best weapons, a couple of the finest horses and rode away in the night.

He had not gone many miles when the moon arose and lighted his way, and suddenly, upon rounding a cliff, he rode almost upon Vasquez, the Bandit, riding well ahead of his men, who were returning slowly to the stronghold loaded down with booty.

The chief recognized him at a glance, and gave a call. But Kit had already his revolver drawn, and the two weapons flashed together.

Down went Kit's horse, killed by the shot of the bandit chief, while out of his saddle Vasquez fell dead.

With the men coming forward Kit was in deadly danger, but his presence of mind saved him, for, like a flash, he called out in Spanish the name of a Mexican regiment of lancers, and ordered them into line, at the same time shouting: "Vasquez and his bandits! Prepare to charge!"

His words were heard by the outlaws, who in wild terror fled, leaving their pack horses laden down with booty.

Shouting orders and firing his revolvers to keep the bandits going, Kit at the same time caught the chief's splendid horse and threw himself into the magnificent silver-studded saddle.

Then he threw the pack off of an animal left by the bandits, and, with a lariat quickly strapped the body into the saddle and leading the animal and his own pack animal he dashed away at full speed.

It was after dawn when he rode into a Mexican fortress and reported that he had killed Vasquez, the Bandit, and would guide a force to the outlaw stronghold.

This he did, and the defeat of the outlaws was complete, while the Mexican commandant went with the youth to prove his claim to the money price set upon the head of Vasquez.

It was not only paid to him without dispute, but the youth was offered an officer's commission in the Mexican Army, which he at once refused, saying that he was an American.

Starting upon his return to Texas, Kit, ever as watchful as an Indian, felt that he had foes on his trail to rob him of his gold, and he determined to be very cautious.

Soon after two men overtook him and he knew by their faces that they were desperadoes, and when they told him that they would keep him company and camp with him that night, he acted promptly.

Quickly he drew his revolver and said:

"I don't want your company, for I know your game, so go and be quick about it!"

The men grumbled, and tried to argue, but Kit was in deadly earnest and rode on without them.

When he camped on the Rio Grande that night he expected to be waylaid by the two men, so he fixed up a dummy in his blankets and got up in a tree to watch.

It was just midnight when the moonlight revealed two forms creeping upon his camp.

He brought his rifle to bear upon them and waited.

When very near the men rose to a kneeling position, leveled their revolvers, took slow aim and fired at the supposed form in the blankets.

Kit fired twice then before the report of their weapons died away, and there was no need to fire again, for the men were dead.

Anxious to get away from the spot with all speed, and cross the Rio Grande, he saddled up his horses, mounted and rode rapidly on.

Crossing the river, his pack horse, though in leading, went a few paces to one side, and with a frightened cry tried to get back to him, but in vain.

Kit knew at once that the animal was caught in the fatal quicksand, and made a strong effort to save him, but in vain.

Fearing for his own horse and himself, he moved on his way, a feeling of horror at his heart as he beheld the animal, pack and all, rapidly sink from sight in the quicksand.

Once across the Rio Grande, and in Texas, Kit felt safe, and making his way to some timber went into camp.

The next morning he went on his way, his destination being the old mission where his mother was buried, the spot where he had passed a number of happy years.

It was near sunset when he reached a hill that gave him a view of the valley in which had stood the mission.

But it was but a ruin, for the Indians had been there and massacred the good people and burned the home, chapel and all.

Down the hill he dashed, and all that he saw told him that Indians had done the red work and done it well.

He went to the little mission cemetery, and but one cross remained at the head of a grave.

That cross he knew sheltered his mother's grave, and upon it was her Indian name, and the one Kit Carson the Scout had given her, the two linked together:

LALULA-DOLORES.

"Our tribe did this cruel deed, for who else knew of, and would have spared, my mother's grave," the youth muttered.

Then he gathered a large bunch of wild flowers in the valley, and spread them upon his mother's grave, after which he staked his horse out, ate a cold supper, and warping himself in his blankets lay down to sleep.

It was just dawn when he awoke to discover that he was surrounded by a band of Indian horsemen.

They were Comanches and he called to them in their own tongue. But he was made captive and taken back to their village, where was the very chief, his mother's father.

The stern old chief welcomed him, but called his people together, and it was decided that he should be allowed to go free, hunt, fish, go on the warpath even, yet if he ever made an effort to escape any Comanche chief, brave, squaw, or child, could instantly kill him.

Under such circumstances, Kit passed a year in the Comanche camp, and saw brought there one day by a raiding party of warriors a number of soldiers and two women.

Before he had been indifferent as to his own escape. But now he determined to do so and also aid the white captives, one of whom was a young lieutenant.

Believing that his grandson had no desire to escape, the head chief had made him a chief, and he had much influence with the Indians, young and old.

But this was only so long as all believed that he wished to remain as one of them Kit well knew.

Using his powers, Kit found a way to talk to the captives and let them know that he was their friend.

He planned their escape, and set about carrying it out in a very thorough way.

So well did he plan and work that when the night set for the escape came he had secreted their weapons away from the camp, with blankets and food, and given the time when the prisoners were to act.

Disguises he also had ready, and going boldly up to the two Indian guards, he bade them enter the prison tepee with him and see that all was secure.

They did so and were seized, bound and securely gagged.

Then the disguises were put on, and one by one the prisoners left the tepee for a certain spot, the two women accompanying the young officer and Kit.

When the Indian guards over the horses saw them coming, and Kit called to them, they supposed it was a hunting party coming after their ponies, and only knew better when they were seized and bound.

Kit would not allow one to be killed unless absolutely necessary.

Mounting picked horses, having already gotten possession of their weapons and provisions, Kit had hidden for them, the party started off in flight.

Kit was the guide and he set the pace and it was a hard one, extra horses having been brought along in case any should break down under the strain.

Until dawn the pace was kept up, and then a halt was made to rest the horses and for breakfast.

But only for an hour, when they again mounted and pressed on.

But not a moment too soon, for in pursuit came over a hundred braves.

The rest to the horses of the fugitives, and their having fed well, then told, for they began to drop their pursuers steadily behind.

It was a desperately hard flight and chase. But late in the afternoon, when the horses of pursued and pursuers could do little more than walk, the stars and stripes came in sight, waving over a fort.

The Comanches then turned back and the fugitives made their way, their horses in a walk, the half dozen miles to the fort, where a joyous welcome greeted them and Kit was made to feel that he was a hero indeed, and the wonderful escape, and his daring would bring him fame along the Texan border and into the far Northwest.

Kit was so well received at the fort, that he very quickly decided to accept the position offered him by the commandant of special scout.

No one better knew the Indian country and cunning ways of the redskins, and he was more than willing to aid in the fights against them, though he well knew how terrible would be the torture he would have to undergo if he fell into their hands.

The Indian blood in his veins made him understand the nature of the red people and match cunning with cunning.

So it was that Kit Carson, Jr., entered upon his duties as scout, and it was not long before he made a name for himself.

He had a small ranch, got about him a lot of cattle and was ever on the alert for the movements of the hostiles, rendering the Government good services by his information and deeds.

Having saved up considerable money, he at last decided to see something of civilization and set off on his travels through the East and South, where, his abilities being recognized, he was engaged to deliver a number of lectures upon the Indian. It was when in the South that he was taken ill and died suddenly, thus ending his very remarkable career.

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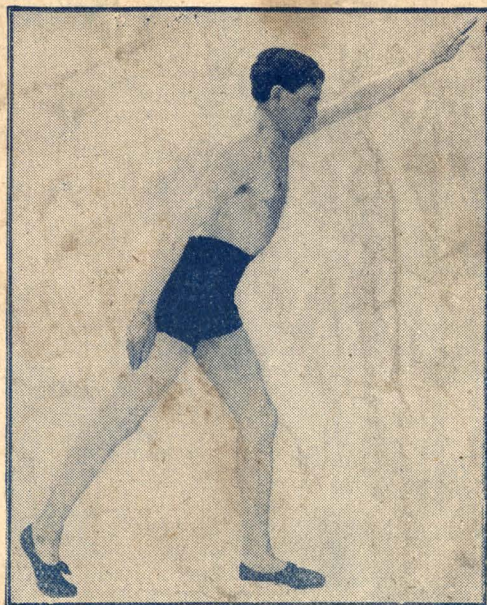
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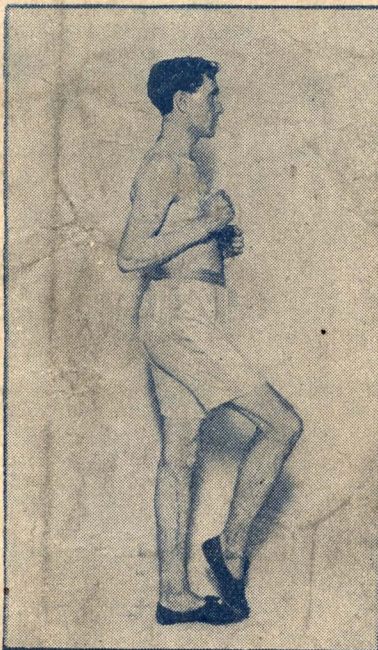
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